OTHER HANDS

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Editorial: Better Late than Never

Did I say something last issue about being "behind schedule?" Welcome to the July issue of *Other Hands*! Yes, it's been a busy summer, but all for the good. Due to logistic considerations, we'll be passing up the October issue in favor of a double January issue; but it will be well worth the wait, believe me! Plenty to tell this time round, but that can wait for the "Frontlines" column.

Let's see now, where to begin? Ah, yes; we continue our "Taste of Things To Come" series with a long awaited word from Jason Beresford on the progress of the new *Umbar* realm module. Now you can find out what he's been up to all this time. There are currently several *MERP* projects underway, so it looks as though this feature is here to stay.

Next in line, David Woolpy, the amazing author of the *Dol Guldur* citadel module, has finally stumbled across us and has submitted a very nice piece on that ever popular topic: Magic in Middle-earth. As you will learn in "Frontlines," David is wanning up for another evil citadel module, and we hope to be seeing contributions from him in future issues. Welcome aboard!

Anders Blixt returns to us after a lengthy hiatus (with some help from our new artist, Quentin Westcott) to offer improved illustrations of the Gondorian warships that were described in *Southern Gondor: The People*.

And then we come to our major feature for this issue: the triumphant return of "Arda Lore." These queries were compiled over the last several months (both solicited and downloaded from the now defunct *MERPlist*). Lots of lore to stimulate casual enthusiasts and hard-core Tolkien scholars alike.

Finally, just to prove that we don't have to be dreary and serious all the time, newcomer John Feil has contrived a highly amusing Middle-earth adaptaion of the game *Teenagers From Outer Space*. Enjoy!

Chris Seeman
September 1996

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Coming Soon
(Issue 15/16; January 1997)

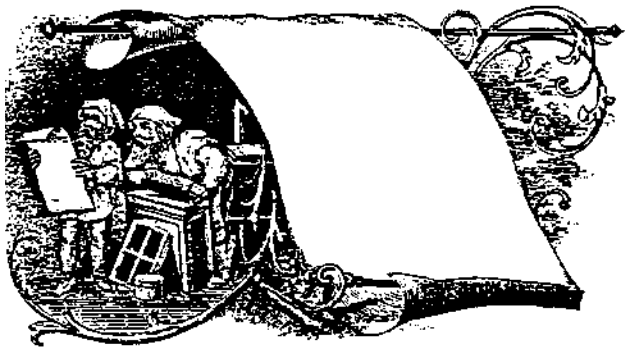
Interview: The Making of *Arnor*
Servants of Angmar
The Beggar-king of Tharbad
Name Glossary for *Arnor*
The Indigenous Population of Eriador
The Peoples of Eriador
Adventure: A Dog's Life

And much more!

COMMUNICATIONS

Fredrik Ekman:

Allow me to congratulate you on yet another fine issue of *Other Hands*. The artwork of #13 is excellent, the articles show vast amounts of knowledge and the layout is a wonder to behold. The one thing I would wish for is some adventures. I also had some difficulties in taking Martin Baker's "New Middle-earth" article seriously. After all, I can see that some people would want to set their campaigns in the Fourth Age, but the Fifth and Sixth Ages? Not I anyway. (Well, there was this MUSH (an on-line computer game) set in the Fifth Age, but with Robo-hobbits and Cyber-orcs that one did not even try to take itself seriously, so it was kind of different.)



And many thanks to Mark Thorne for the feedback on "Digital Hands." Indeed, Mr. Thorne's criticism (or perhaps rather foreboding) has been a major concern of mine when deciding on what to include in the column. The problem, however, is not so much that nothing new happens (with new MUDs coming on and off-line with a rate of several each year there is little risk of that) but rather that I, as a collector and computer gaming old-timer, am personally very interested in the older games. In the light of this, some historical pieces will be unavoidable. *OH* 15, for instance, will include an interview with Philip Mitchell, author of *The Hobbit* and several other classic games, and in the distant future I plan an article about *Moria* and *Angband* (the latter of which is still being developed, by the way). All these are, however, games which have been very influential on the entire computer games industry, and I feel that documenting their history is important. I would like to argue Mr. Thorne's point about "games no one plays anymore." With the current rise of a very strong community of people using emulators to play their old favorites from the eighties on Pentiums, Macs and the like, I think it is safe to say that *The Hobbit* and other oldies are far from dead. I realize, of course, that the emulator aficionados are probably not the same people that read *Other Hands,* and I will act accordingly.

In conclusion, I hope to make "Digital Hands" vital, entertaining and appealing to as large an audience as possible. To those ends, feedback such as that from Mr. Thome is invaluable and I hope to hear from others as well with suggestions for improvements.

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Christina Scull:

I would like to comment on the remarks made by Martin Baker about literary dogmatism and intellectual snobbery in some Tolkien organizations. Such organizations, and publications such as *Other Hands,* vary in the way they approach Tolkien studies. Just as one would not expect long literary articles in *Other Hands* since it is 'The International Journal for Middle-earth Gaming', so one does not subscribe to

OH ERRATA

Issue 13 (p. 17): Other themes include the...[Wainrider Wars, Gondor's Shipkings, and the War of the Ring. These theme books are as important as the realm books describing the geopolitical area of northwestern Middle-earth. I envision forming a core with them from which we slowly make bridges to outlying areas. I'd avoid leaping from one end of the continent to the other—I would want to move incrementally. A third focus is *LOR,* which was originally conceived as a six-part campaign; the final two adventures have never been published. A partial manuscript for the fifth adventure needs an author to build on what first writer began but did not complete.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY ADDENDUM

Chris Seeman "Un viaggio nell'Oscurita'" *Terra di Mezzo* 3:16-20 ["A Jorney in the Dark;" translated from *OH5*]

Enrico Clementel "Tutto in una notte" *Terra di Mezzo* 3:68-72 [MERP adventure]

FINE PRINT

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role-playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's -world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word. Other Hands aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role-playing communitiy. Within the pages of Other Hands, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including Rolemaster and Middle-earth Roleplaying). Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen pring in Iron Crown's modules. Other Hands provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: inside the USA — 1 issue $3/4 issues $12; outside the USA — surface, 1 issue $5.50/4 issues $18. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213 Novato, CA 94948, USA No Eurochecks, please!

Submissions are welcome in any from (preferably legible), but we prefer if you can to send a file. We use Word for Windows. If there is any question as to the readibility of you file, please save it in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 [USA]. Please write me or call if you have any difficulties. My phone number is [415] 892-9066. Please note also that I mav be reached on-line at: **chris1224@aol.com**

the more literary societies for long gaining articles, spin-off fiction, or wide-ranging speculative articles not substantiated by the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. The Mythopoeic Society, which is 'an international literary and educational Organization devoted to the study of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams', does not print any such articles in its journal Mythlore, though there are many less literary events at its annual Mythcon. The (British) Tolkien Society is less rigid and does publish **a** few such articles, but necessarily it must concentrate on the more literary aspects since it is registered as a Charity (which gives it several financial advantages) only by virtue of the educational aims enshrined in its constitution: 'The Society shall seek to educate the public in, and promote research into the life and works of Professor John Ronald Reuel Tolkien... ' The Charities Commission has been keeping a closer check on such educational charities.

I think that the range of interests in Tolkien and his works is probably wider than for any other literary figure, and it is difficult for any one society to cover all aspects fully—gaming, spin-off fiction. Middle-earth Studies, Tolkien Studies (to use the useful distinction made by John Ellison between those who want to treat Middle-earth as a 'real world' and enlarge on what Tolkien wrote or fill in gaps, and those who want to study Tolkien and his literary creation). Some people are interested in the whole range, others in only part, and over the years groups and magazines have been started to cater to specialist interests. For instance, when a long article on Tolkien linguistics appeared in the Tolkien Society's journal *Mallorn* c.1980 (the first such), there were so many protests from those not interested in linguistics that a special group for linguists was founded, with its own magazine *Quettar*. I produce *The Tolkien Collector* for those who collect books by and on Tolkien and other relevant items, but I would not expect a general Tolkien magazine to print the detailed descriptions and extracts from dealers' catalogues which I include.

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FRONTLINES

What has happened in the world of Middle-earth gaming since April? Well, for reasons still unknown, the *MERP* discussion list on the Internet crashed a month ago but it has recently been revived at merp@tower.clark.net.

Speaking of non-events on the Internet, the much hyped appearance of *OH* 12 on the vastus website never transpired, and the manager of that site has mysteriously vanished off the face of the earth. However, the splash pages for the site are still sitting there on the Net, and anyone who wants to check out the cool graphics for what was going to be the *OH* cover page can do so by reaching the site (www.vastus.com), clicking on the circle at the center of the screen, and then clicking on the OH logo appearing on the second screen.

OK, now for some good news: *Other Hands* now has 82 subscribers *(54* American, 28 international). Sure, that's still pretty small as gaming journals go, but it's a steady increase by any reckoning.

As for *MERP* products, most of my summer was spent re-editing the *Arnor* realm module in preparation for its second printing as a two-volume work. The new edition will, of course, be worth getting, even if you own the old, one-volume edition; among other goodies, it will feature: 1) maps whose edges match (following the example of *(SG:TL),* 2) lots of new or revised internal maps, 3) scores of new Elvish translations for hitherto untranslated names that appear in the original edition, 4) a fully updated and grammatically perfect text, harmonized with new information that has appeared in various module releases since 1994 and with forthcoming modules, 5) new NPC bios with stats for Gandalf, Arwen, Elladan and Elrohir. Finally, just as with the *Southern Gondor* modules, we ran all of the Elvish (and other foreign languages) past a professional Middle-earth linguist to ensure accuracy. A full glossary of the name-changes, modifications, and additions incorporated into the new edition will be included in the next issue of *OH.* The most recent ETAs for the new *Arnor* have been given as October ("The People") and November ("The Land").

Next on the burner is *Forodwaith,* a bold new realm module by Randy Maxwell. This module will cover ALL of the territory north of Eriador, from the lands beyond the Grey Mountains in the east to the northwestemmost islands off the coast of Pete Fenlon's Middle-earth continent map. Final editing should commence within the next few weeks, and a Christmas '96 release is hoped for (though I personally have a feeling that it will not be ready until January or February of next year). A lot depends on how soon the color map can be commissioned. By the time *Forodwaith* is in production, Mike Campbell's *Rhûn* realm module (previewed last issue) should be ready for editing.

It was recently decided between Jessica Ney-Grimm and myself that the current manuscript for an herb sourcebook should be expanded to include more information on healers and healing traditions in general. The idea is to come up with a sourcebook—perhaps a series of sourcebooks—oriented towards different player character professions (analogous in scope, but superior in content, to the "character class

supplements" currently offered by TSR). In this case, the book will focus on the role played by healers within the various cultures of Middle-earth (e.g., how to create a healer character from a given culture, what sort of healing lore or skills that culture has access to, etc.). The book will then conclude with an exhaustive compendium of all the healing herbs that have been mentioned in previous *MERP* modules (after the fashion of the *Creatures* and *Treajures* sourcebooks). The tentative plan is to make this project a collective endeavor, with each race or culture covered by an author who is working (or already has published) a module on that people. So, for instance, Wes Frank would write entries for the healing traditions of Hobbits and of Haradrim, while Randy Maxwell would do the entry on the Lossoth, and so forth. The result, we hope, will be an incredibly diverse and richly detailed tome that can be applied to practically any culture of northwestern Middle-earth. Work will hopefully begin on this book within the next month. The book's new title (formerly *Athelas and Other Herbs*) has not yet been decided. Any ideas?

There are at least five new projects in the wings. The first of these, a *Lindon* realm module, is being written by newcomer Howard Jones. David Wendelken (a veteran contributor to the *Southern Gondor* releases) is currently working on a proposal for a revised *Lórien* realm module. As mentioned last issue, David Woolpy has been confirmed for work on a *Minas Morgul* citadel piece, and is presently awaiting some improved maps of Minas Ithil. A New Zealander duo, Sam Daish and Steve Martin, have announced their intention to write a *Tharbad* citadel module. Finally, Justin Morgan-Davies has begun work with co-author Steve Randall on a proposal for a *Dwarves* people book. Meanwhile, the already announced *Dorwinion, Khand, Near Harad, Ringwraiths,* and *Umbar* projects proceed apace.

The *Paths of the Dead* project has also made progress since last issue. Its author team has been assembled and play-testing of several adventure ideas has begun. A good deal of conceptual work was ironed out over the summer pertaining to the nature and powers of undead in Tolkien's world, but much still remains to be done before serious work can be done on the citadel layout.

The *Northern Gondor* realm module project has been held in abeyance for the moment due to the more immediate priorities of *Arnor* and *Forodwaith,* but a lot of on-line R&D has already transpired concerning the Rhovanion frontier with the *Darwinion* and *Rhûn* authors; and now that a *Tharbad* citadel is in the works, development of the Enedhwaith frontier should soon commence.

I may have spoken somewhat prematurely about the hoped-for Middle-earth language guide (mentioned last issue), since no agreement has actually been concluded between ICE and the prospective authors. However, a formal project proposal is scheduled to be made and I anticipate that negotiations will begin. In the interim, the fearsome four have not been idle. They have been busy preparing Tolkien's "Quenya Lexicon" (which, if I understand correctly, goes all the way back to 1914!) for publication.

Reporter: **Chris Seeman**

Business as usual in Mordor...
Grishnákh, take a letter: "Four Rings for the Elven-kings"... no, no, no, better make that "Two Rings." No, maybe "Five Rings"...
Concept: Tom Loback; art: P. Wynne ©1989

Digital Hands

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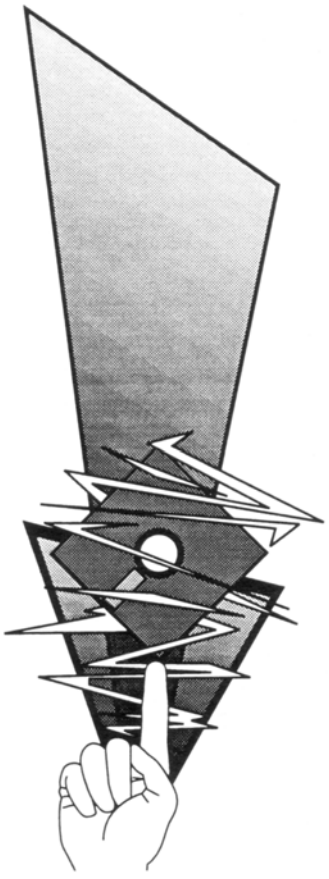

Even under normal circumstances, Digital Hands deals with a borderzone of role-playing. In this article, I will move yet one step further away from traditional role-playing and into the world of strategic war-games.

There have been very few computer strategy games set in Middle-earth, at least compared with the number of text adventures and RPGs. The most well-known are *War in Middle Earth* (Melbourne House) and *Riders of Rohan* (Mirrorsoft).

The main problem with these and other games is that they are for one player only, and anyone with normal intelligence will soon tire of the stupid computer adversary. This kind of game is usually much more enjoyable when two or more human players can play against each other. This is possible in the two games to which I will devote the rest of this article: *Xconq* and *Warlords II*.

Warlords II is based on the concept of cities which produce army units. Each player (with a maximum of eight) starts with one city and one army unit. Each player also has one hero, which can be used to find treasure and allies and as a military leader in the game. The computer can play any number of sides.

It is a commercial game for PC and Mac released by SSG and its normal setup is a standard fantasy world, clearly inspired by Tolkien. Many players have used the Scenario Builder (which can be bought separately) to create scenarios set in Middle-earth. So far as I know, no less than nine exist, three of which can be played on *Warlords II Deluxe*, a more advanced version of the game. They can unfortunately not be played on the Mac.

These scenarios differ in terms of quality. Some of them have crude maps, strange political divisions and weird military units. Every single one of them also suffers from the fact that *Warlords II* was not written with Middle-earth in mind to begin with. Thus, it feels very strange to play Gondor and be forced to start by conquering all the cities of Gondor (which initially are neutral). Also, all sides are of more or less equal strength to begin with. In fact, the strongest side is often The Shire, since there are few potential enemies (and in *Warlords II*, anyone is a potential enemy) nearby. It should perhaps be mentioned that I have not played the *Warlords II Deluxe* scenarios, and so cannot comment on them.

At first glance, there would seem to be many similarities between *Warlords II* and *Xconq*. *Xconq* is a Freeware game written by Stanley Shebs which is played in real-time over a network. The latest version, 7.1, is available for Unix and Mac (although the Mac version is one-player only).

Just like in *Warlords II* there are cities and other places where new army units can be produced. As one plays on, however, it soon becomes clear that *Xconq* is many times more advanced than *Warlords II*. It is played on a hex map and the limitations in number of sides, what units each player starts with, the technology level and many other things depend on what game the player chooses to play. *Xconq* is delivered with a wide range of different games, from the Middle Ages to outer space. One of these, titled *Middle Earth* and written by Massimo Campostrini from Italy, allows players to take different sides in the War of the Ring. Unfortunately, *Middle Earth* does not take advantage of many of *Xconq's* features.

I would highly recommend these two games to anyone who enjoys strategy games. Both *Xconq* and *Warlords II* are very good, the latter perhaps being more of a beginner's game. With all the scenarios that have been made for them and the multiplayer option, they will last for a very long time. The Middle-earth scenarios may not be the best things about them, but are still well worth a look.

Xconq on the Internet

home page:
http://www.cygnus.com/~shebs/xconq.html

Warlords II on the Internet

official home page:
http://www.ssg.com.au/index_files/warlords_ii_home.html

player's web site:
http://www.princeton.edu/~rfheeter/w2home.html

Middle-earth scenarios:
http://www.lysator.liu.se/tolkien-games/warlords2.html

News flash!

Just as I am finishing this article, word reaches me that at least three Middle-earth scenarios are being developed for *Civilization II*, which is a strategy game with more emphasis on socio-economic factors, and yet another for *Warcraft II*.

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UMBAR

While I could regale you with the tale of how I came to work on the revision of the original Umbar: Haven of the Corsairs, *I would rather devote this article to an actual outline of the new* Umbar. *I have spent over six years developing Umbar and, with every passing day, new insights are revealed.*

The quality of the forthcoming incarnation of Umbar will be due in part to the extensive collaboration I have had with other authors as they have developed their own manuscripts. Many long-winded discussions about both important and unimportant details has helped refine my ideas about Umbar into a significantly more sophisticated form. If not for numerous conversations and/or letters with Anders Blixt (KS & SG), *Gunnar Brolin* (KS & SG), *Chris Seeman* (KS, SG, NG), *Wesley Frank* (SG, NH, & Arnor), *and Jesse Dallin* (Khand), *the* Umbar *revision would be in print by now, but it would be a less satisfactory product.*

Not to be forgotten are the people at ICE. Umbar is near and dear to their hearts, and I have had to take their concerns and views into account when altering the original module, such as their comparison of Umbar with ancient Carthage. However, this has forced me to do more research than I would have done otherwise. Rather than being a problem, the research has been fascinating and will be a tremendous aid in improving the module. Of course, this has also contributed to the delay in completion of the Umbar *manuscript.*

With the passing years, the format ICE has used for the description of a nation, realm, or significant power has changed. In the latest incarnation, *Southern Gondor* (what had been a Realm module) became a two volume set: *The Land* and *The People*. The *Umbar* revision will also follow this format; thus, I will describe my efforts with this in mind.

My main objective is to portray Umbar as the power I see it to be. It is the first permanent Númenórean colony in Middle-earth, and thus gains a vital advantage among the other Númenórean colonies, of which it is the largest, most influential, and most powerful. With the loss of Númenor, Umbar naturally sees itself as the true inheritor of Númenórean power and prestige, thus setting the stage for later conflicts with Gondor.

Languages have always been important in ICE products, with the Grey-elven tongue (Sindarin) predominating in both place and personal names, particularly among the Dúnedain of Arnor and Gondor. To date, the native Adûnaic language has been largely ignored. I have no plans to include an Adûnaic language dictionary as part of either volume. However, Umbar retains a strong cultural link to Númenor, and particularly to Númenor as an imperial power, when Adûnaic was largely preferred over Sindarin or other tongues. So expect a large sampling of Adûnaic names to appear in both the *People* and *Land* volumes. Two that will be prominently used are Sakalai ("Coast People") and Mulkhêrhil ("Followers of Melkor").

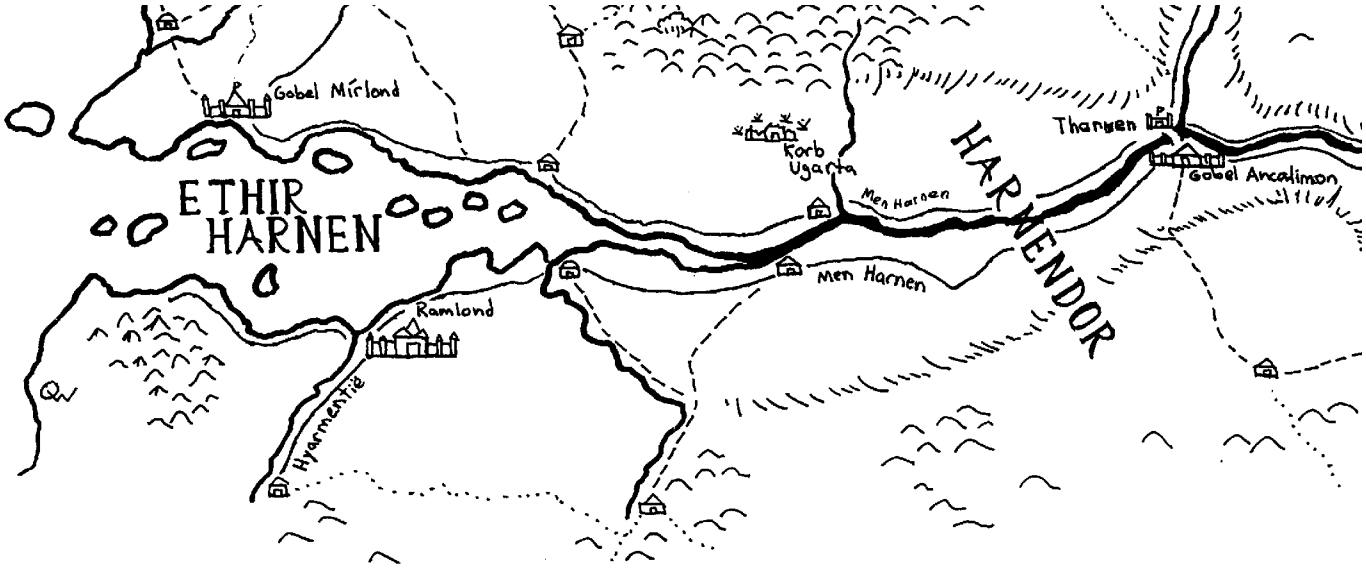
THE PEOPLE

This volume will encompass the same general topics as were presented in *Southern Gondor: The People*: history, population, politics, warcraft, society & culture, religion, figures of note, objects of power, and adventures. However, I will also include a detailed explanation of the Umbarean economy.

The most important aspect of this volume will be to reveal the complexity of Umbarean society. Up until now, nearly all Umbareans in ICE products are presented in a highly negative light. Either they are pirates, slavers, allies or lieutenants of Sauron, and/or worshipers of Melkor. Even the followers of Castamir who retreat to Umbar following the Kin-strife are presented this way, yet as Gondor's traditionalists, all except the "piracy" would be anathema to them, and even that is regarded as a continuation of the Kin-strife. Yet, both historically and contemporaneous with the usual mid-Third Age adventure dates, Umbareans generally do not fail into any of these categories. It is only during a short period in the Second Age, and the last millennia of the Third, that large enough portions of the population can be stereotyped this way.

Umbarean merchants travel the world, seeking profit from all they meet. Following the Kin-strife, the Corsairs (descendants of Castamir and his followers) continue the civil war with Eldacar and his heirs while dreaming of retaking Gondor. The pure-blooded Dúnedain seek to preserve their lineage against the ride of time and the effects of intermarriage with "lesser" peoples. A variety of interest groups, some culturally and others politically based, vie for advantage and position in Umbar's hierarchy. Meanwhile, remnants of the Cult of Melkor hide in the shadows, biding their time until they can seize power again.

Second Age Númenórean practices, beliefs, and culture will take an important place in this volume as a necessary basis for describing Third Age Umbarean society. Umbar's Númenórean population places great weight on ties to the sunken isle, and a strong, conservative, cultural view dominates in Umbar, even during the periods of Gondorian rule. However, the one twist I will introduce is that the strongest links are to traditions that evolved among the Númenóreans within the colony itself, rather than those in Númenor.



An extensive section on the Umbarean economy is warranted, given my view that Umbar is a world trading power. Others may dominate certain markets, but Umbarean traders or their agents can be found in every land. This allows them a unique access to markets and is the reason for Umbar's wealth. Without her fleets and caravans, Umbar would not be a power capable of threatening Gondor, nor of resisting it long after the loss of key territories (it took Gondor 120 years to defeat Umbar, even after Eärnil captured the city).

Tied in with the economy will be my explanation of the origin of the monetary/coinage systems of all Númenórean colonies (including Gondor, Arnor, and Umbar) and their influence on other nations. I have always been a bit confused about the origins of the "1/4 oz. gold piece," particularly when the Dwarves of Khazad-dûm produce a 1/7 oz. gp that is equal in value to the 1/4 oz. "Mannish" gold coin. Before you get too bored by the thought of metal alloys, minting methods, and coinage conversion costs, this will be only a small portion of this section. While many of the lands of eastern Middle-earth are not yet defined, I do plan on identifying a few key nations (based on usage in other ICE products) and to provide trading information about them.

Umbarean power stems almost entirely from her maritime fleets. While the number of ships varies over time, during the mid-Third Age Umbar possesses around 4,000 ships of sizes ranging from small coastal vessels (25 tons displacement) to the great palanristi (2,000+ tons displacement). Descriptions of the most important ship types will be provided along with information about how to use them in adventures linked to Umbar's trading activities.

THE LAND

To my mind, one of the most serious failings of the original *Umbar: Haven of the Corsairs* was its overall lack of information about the land, water, towns, and ruins around the Nen Umbar. Central to supporting a separate volume will be an extensive gazetteer. Key cities, towns, fortresses, and ruins will receive an additional, in-depth description separate from the gazetteer itself. To date, I have not spent much time defining the scope of adventure material except as relates in a general way to the various sites which will receive detailed descriptions separate from the gazetteer. I intend to cover about a dozen such locations, each with at least one overview map. Depending on the site, additional maps may be provided to provide details for adventure material or for other sites.

In *Southern Gondor: The Land,* the gazetteer was almost 100 published pages long. I have no predictions regarding the final size of the Umbar gazetteer, but it will be large enough to support this second volume. It should be noted that there will be some overlap with sites described in Southern Gondor, particularly in Harondor. Where this overlap does occur, I intend to add additional information to each entry, typically something from an Umbarean point of view.

The City of Umbar is the most important site to be described. Yet within it are at least four sub-sites that will also be detailed: Tarma Tar-Calion, Minas Eärnil, the great ship-house in Umbar s main harbor, and the Temple of Melkor. Tarma Tar-Calion was built by the Númenórean king, Ar-Pharazôn, to commemorate his victory over Sauron. At over 700', it is tallest structure in Umbar and is crowned by a great orb (sister to the Erech Stone) upon which Sauron made powerful oaths to Ar-Pharazôn. The orb, the tower, and its inhabitants play an important role in Umbar. Minas Eärnil is built upon the ruins of the Temple of Melkor, both to ward them against reuse by the Mulkhêrhil. At various times it serves as a seat of power, a sanctuary, and a repository of lore. Yet, when the Mulkhêrhil regain power in Umbar and the Temple of Melkor is rebuilt, Minas Eärnil is incorporated into its structure and becomes a dark and evil place (much like Minas Ithil, though not with the permanent taint placed on the Tower of the Moon by the Witch-king). The great ship-house is an incredible feat of Númenórean engineering built during the rule of Tar- Ancalimon. It easily dwarfs all other structures in Umbar. Full rigged sailing ships, even the great palanristi, can enter through its massive doors for refit and repairs.

After the City of Umbar, the haven of Dûsalan is next largest in size. Founded by the Númenóreans during Tar-Ancalimon's reign, it has always maintained its independence from its larger neighbor to the north. However, at times it has been forced to assume a subservient role that equates to being a protectorate of Umbar or Gondor (particularly during Castamir's reign). Its importance as an independent power becomes evident during the late Third Age. After Umbar falls under Sauron's black shadow and the Mulkhêrhil are resurgent, it is the people of Dûsalan that keep a check on Umbarean aggression for many years. For any wishing to

travel south along the Hyarmentië, Dûsalan is the last major city before skirting the western edge of the Talath Naur. The city maintains a series of waystations in that arid waste to facilitate caravan travel.

To the north of Umbar, both Ramlond and Mírlond rate further description. They are among the largest settlements controlled by Umbar, but they also play a crucial role in the wars between Umbar and Gondor. As sister cities, they are often rivals, but together they control usage of the Ethir Harnen and access to the Harnen itself. Of the two, Ramlond has the most significant role in Umbarean history because, after Umbar is lost to Gondor in T.A. 1810, it becomes the capital of the exile Umbareans who later retake Umbar in 1944.

Gobel Ancalimon and Tharven guard the two ends of the Iant Harnen, perhaps the greatest bridge ever built in Middle-earth. Like many of the works in this region, both the bridge and the cities date from the reign of Tar-Ancalimon and immediately follow Adûnaphel's rebellion in S.A. 2280. Rather than focusing on the town of Gobel Ancalimon, the Iant Harnen will be the centerpiece. Gobel Ancalimon and Tharven will be mapped, and some additional information not included in their gazetteer entries will be provided. At over five miles in length, the Iant Harnen and its associated structures rival those of any city or town. Expect maps of all the significant features of associated with the bridge.

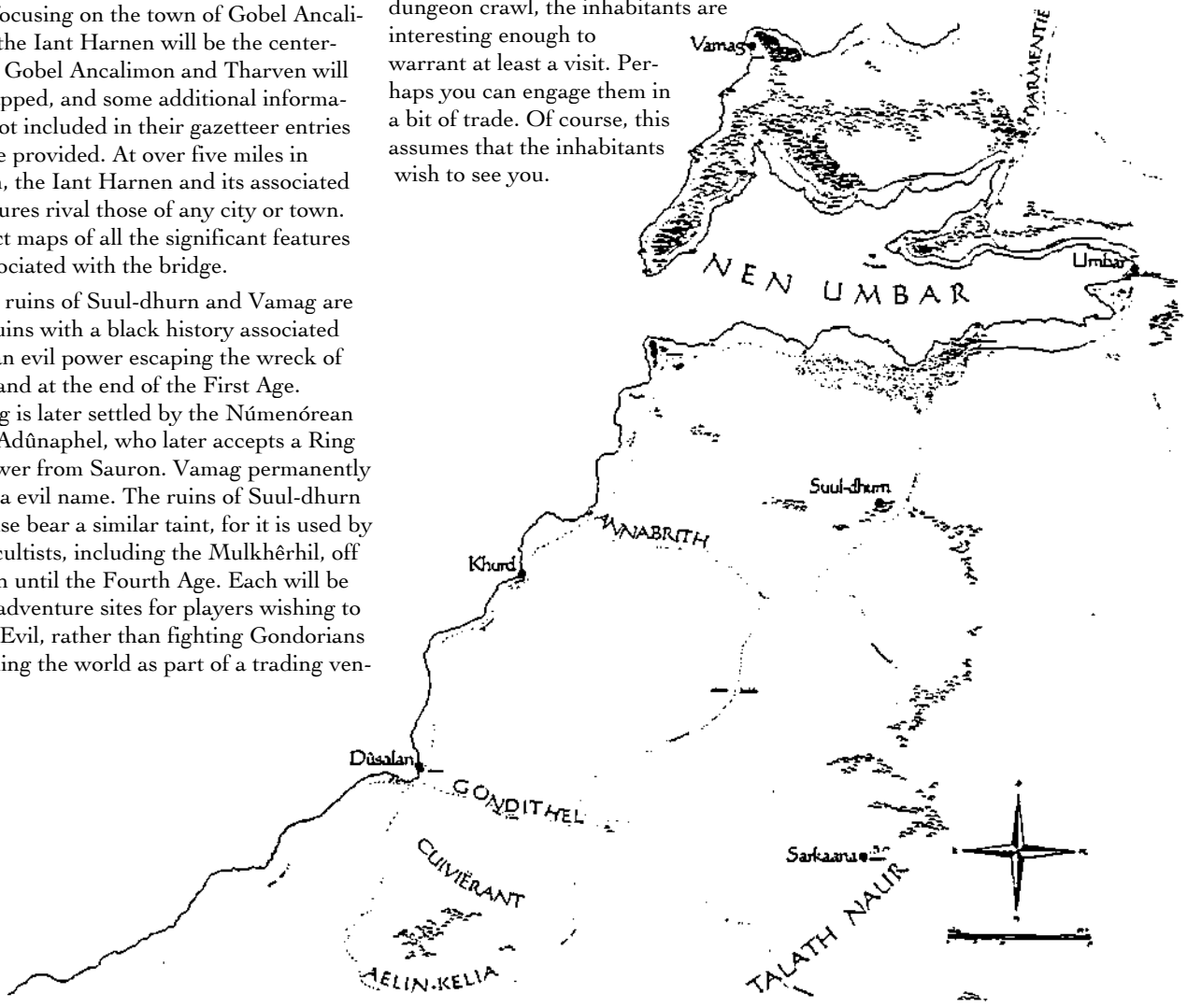
The ruins of Suul-dhurn and Vamag are two ruins with a black history associated with an evil power escaping the wreck of Angband at the end of the First Age. Vamag is later settled by the Númenórean lady, Adûnaphel, who later accepts a Ring of Power from Sauron. Vamag permanently bears a evil name. The ruins of Suul-dhurn likewise bear a similar taint, for it is used by dark cultists, including the Mulkhêrhil, off and on until the Fourth Age. Each will be good adventure sites for players wishing to smite Evil, rather than fighting Gondorians or sailing the world as part of a trading venture.

South of the Annabrith lie the ruins of Khurd. It was once the proud town and estate of a powerful Númenórean lord who sailed with Ar-Pharazôn for Aman. Like all the other King's Men who sailed west, none returned. The town was destroyed in fighting after no legitimate heir could be found and the local Melkor-temple was thrown down. For two thousand years it was abandoned, possessing a dark reputation of ghosts and wights seeking the blood any who visit. Yet, at various times, it is the haven for pirates. Perhaps the spirits rest for a time, allowing the pirates to use the ruined but functional harbor. Or perhaps the pirates make dark sacrifices to appease the spirits. Gird yourself for battle, any who wish to challenge the dark forces here. Perhaps you will be the one to cleanse the taint from the town and enable it to be rebuilt.

The Caves of Aelin-Kelia and the forest of the Cuivierant, south of Dûsalan and on the margin of the Talath Naur, house a number of secrets. Though I do not intend for the caves or forest to be an adventure site for a dungeon crawl, the inhabitants are interesting enough to warrant at least a visit. Perhaps you can engage them in a bit of trade. Of course, this assumes that the inhabitants wish to see you.

On the northern edge of the Talath Naur, atop the escarpment forming the southern boundary of the Nan Gondeithel, lie the ruins of Sarkaana and the fortress that guards them. A place of mystery, few visit this citadel. Yet a slow, constant stream of gold and precious stones make their way from this area to Dûsalan. Coveted by Umbar, it has resisted all attempts to take it. Its ties to Dûsalan are unknown to all but a few. Three types of adventures can be tied to this site: capture of the fortress and uncover its secrets, attempt to trade with its denizens, or explore the ruins of Sarkaana.

Umbar has been a long time in development. As stated in the beginning of this article, I believe the events which have delayed completion of the manuscript will allow me to produce a significantly improved product as compared to my original vision six years ago. I will make no explicit predictions for completion at this time, but my goal is to finish b mid-1997.



The Unique Magic of Middle-earth

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Just as a myriad of fantasy roleplaying games exist, an equally diverge set of reasons can be found as to why people wish to play certain systems over others. When it comes to Middle-earth Role Playing, *one of the attractions is undoubtedly the Sea of "entering" Tolkien's world and taking part in the fascinating history of Endor. Not only is Middle-earth complete with a vivid background and detailed settings, it has an atmosphere all its own in fantasy literature. Perhaps nothing illustrates this concept more clearly than the unique nature of magic in Middle-earth, for those GMs who wish not only to recreate the geography, history and people of Middle-earth, but also this unusual outlook on magic, the following guidelines may provide some useful concepts from which to start. This information should be used in place of the rules given in the* Middle-earth Role Playing- Second *Edition guidelines on pages 70-75 and264. Remember, however, that these ideas are designed to serve as guidelines and not detailed rules. GMs are left to determine how these principles should be applied to their campaign.*

To aid in illustrating the basic premises behind this article, that magic in Middle-earth is unique among FRP worlds, we begin with a passage that presents many of the ideas discussed below:

> "But though [the Fellowship] had brought wood and kindlings by the advice of Boromir, it passed the skill of Elf or even Dwarf to strike a flame that would hold amid the swirling wind or catch in the wet fuel. At last reluctantly Gandalf himself took a hand. Picking up a faggot he held it aloft for a moment, and then with a word of command, *naur an edraith ammen!,* he thrust the end of his staff into the midst of it. At once a great spout of green and blue flame sprang out, and the wood flared and sputtered.
>
> 'If there are any to see, than I at least am revealed to them,' he said. 'I have written *Gandalf is here* in signs that all can read from Rivendell to the Mouths of Anduin' (FotR: 380)."

Magic in Middle-earth, as clearly shown here, is a scarce and mysterious thing. Use of this power, even for such simple acts as lighting a fire is never a trivial matter. If someone as masterful as an Istar hesitates to use his power, then lesser spellcasters should certainly feel this great need for restraint. One clear reason to withhold the overt use of magic, as the passage shows, is that other spell-users are likely to discover the caster's presence. Another perhaps more subtle reason for restraint is that excessive use of power is not in keeping with the grand designs of Ilúvatar. Gandalf, in accordance with the desires of Eru, rarely chose to wield his full strength against his foes, and preferred to inspire others to rise up against evil. He and the other Istari were not sent to Middle-earth to overcome Sauron by force, so their use of magic was highly limited. This theme of constraining the use of power and allowing events to take a more natural course prevails throughout the history of Middle-earth, and is never more true than with magical

abilities. Though spellcasting PCs will not have the impending responsibility of an Istar, they will risk turning down a path of evil if their power is used too often to further their own ends. The Dark Lord, Saruman and the Mouth of Sauron are all individuals who succumbed to these selfish desires, and each came to rely on their magical power to dominate others and serve themselves. But other spellcasters, such as Gandalf, Galadriel and Elrond, were wise in their use of magic and principally put forth their power in more subtle ways, most often for the benefit of others. Of course at times, such as during the battle with the Balrog of Moria, Gandalf was forced to use his full power. But these mighty displays of wizardry were always reserved for moments of great need and were seldom sought out.

Furthermore, magic in Middle-earth is at the same time both dynamic and simple. Endor's magic is dynamic because most influential spellcasters are not merely learned people who have acquired magical skills. They are beings of a supernatural or immortal nature. Gandalf and Saruman are not wise old men well practiced in the arts of wizardry. They are Maiar from the immortal land of Aman, sent to Middle-earth by Manwë, Lord of the Valar. Similarly, Elrond and Galadriel are great leaders of the Noldor, who have lived thousands of years accumulating their unmatched skills and vast knowledge. But perhaps the clearest example of all is Sauron himself, who is not simply an evil sorcerer who has used his powers to gain dominion over others. He is the legacy of the incarnation of Evil itself. The presence of these individuals and others creates a core of magic practitioners with power far beyond the reach of mortal Men.

But, even with all these substantial individuals present, magic in Middle-earth remains a simple, albeit powerful force. Many spells or other enchantments quite common in other FRP worlds are rare and often far more effective in Middle-earth. Take for instance the One Ring's power of invisibility. Leaving aside the Ring's other enchantments, the power of making the wearer invisible was considered to be extraordinary. And this ability allowed Bilbo to accomplish great deeds that would otherwise have been impossible. Another example of this idea is the power of flight. Even Gandalf. imprisoned in the high reaches of Orthanc, needed the assistance of a great eagle to fly from his jail. If the power of magical flight is denied to Gandalf, then it must be a rare power indeed. And one last instance helps illustrate this theme of simple yet powerful magic. This example concerns the magic of scrying, or using some device to view far distant places. Somewhat common in many FRP systems, scrying magic is another power both rare and substantial in Middle-earth. The *palantíri* are among Gondor's greatest possessions, and Sauron's acquisition of one of these orbs had a monumental affect on his ability to gather information and exert his will across Middle-earth. These examples combined with the potency of Endor's greatest spellcasters illustrate the often basic yet powerful nature of magic in Middle-earth.

SPELL USE IN MIDDLE-EARTH

In keeping with this unique magical nature, PCs who are pure spellcasters should be considered rare and unusual individuals. Of course, they need not be Maiar or even Lords of the Noldor, because, as the existence of the Mouth of Sauron demonstrates, even mortal Men can become skilled in the use of magic. But these individuals will in most instances have an usual background that has allowed them the opportunity to learn magic skills that are unavailable to most people. The Mouth of Sauron, for example, was a Black Númenórean who fell under the influence of the Dark Lord early in his life, and learned secrets of magic known only to a few. Other examples of this idea are individuals who live in communities that are particularly attuned to some aspect of Middle-earth. For instance, the Woodmen of Mirkwood, who have lived for many generations in close connection with the forest, might have members of their society that can make use of magic spells related to this terrain, such as the spell lists "Nature's Movement," "Nature's Lore," or "Plant Mastery." The general idea is that some clear reason should exist that allows the individual the chance to learn these rare skills.

But when a mortal embarks on a spell-using career, many dangers are present that create great hazards for them. Again, the Mouth of Sauron is a clear example of this idea. Though he is a mortal Man who has far exceeded the abilities of his peers, he gave in to his desires for greater power and knowledge and in the end became a servant of Darkness. To avoid the fate of the Mouth, a PC spellcaster must restrain his use of magic, and endeavor to assist others more so than himself, lest the temptations of personal power overcome him.

In order to simulate these temptations, a GM should often quietly remind players who control spellcasters of the possibilities of their character's power, and of how acquisition of powerful items and greater knowledge could raise their status far above that of their companions. If a PC shows that he is withholding the use of spells, subtly point out how much easier some tasks might be by using his magic. And always make spellcasters aware of the potential power and influence that is theirs for the taking. This last idea can be accomplished by expounding the prowess of famous spellcasters such as Saruman and Gandalf. The GM can remind the PC that he is not so different from the Istari that he could not become nearly as influential, and other similar ideas. The goal of these suggestions is to create an atmosphere where the temptations to exert greater magical force are not only determined by the role playing skills of the players, but are actual temptations felt by the players themselves.

The GM, however, should understand that excessive use of magic is not in itself evil or corrupting. But when a PC spellcaster overexerts his own influence in Middle-earth through magic, he will create the possibility of alienating himself from more reserved spellcasters, as well as create a chance that evil powers may attempt to draw the PC into their fold. These persuasive techniques will be similar to Saruman's two attempts to bring Gandalf over to his way of thinking. In truth, the basis for evil in magic-use, as in most aspects of Middle-earth, is that it increases the likelihood that the user will act with selfish motives. And, as the histories of Morgoth and Sauron vividly illustrate, behaving in a self-centered manner is the source of all evil in Arda.

The more practical reason for restraint in magic-use concerns the idea of other spellcasters sensing a PC's power. Whenever magic of any kind is used in Middle-earth, emanations of that power are sent out across the land, something akin to ripples in a lake. And any individual who is particularly attuned to magical energy, such as a powerful spellcaster, has a chance of sensing a disturbance in the magical fabric of the world. In order to determine the

outcome of any use of spells or spell-like powers the two tables, "Table of Magical Emanations" and "Spellcasting Detection Table" [on next page] can be used.

Table of Magical Emanations

Level of Spell	Radius of Emanation
1st-2nd	N/A
3rd-4th	1/2 mile
5th-6th	2 miles
7th-8th	5 miles
9th-10th	10 miles
11th-12th	25 miles
13th-15th	50 miles
20th	100 miles
25th	125 miles
30th	150 miles
50th	200 miles

The former table is used to determine the radius of magical emanations given off by any particular spell or spell-like power. As can be seen on the table, this area increases as the spell level goes up. Whenever a PC casts a spell or uses an enchanted item with similar powers, the GM should determine if any individuals are present within the area that could potentially detect this magic-use. The GM can make use of the map of northwestern Middle-earth found on p. 265 of the *Middle-earth Role Playing Second Edition* guidelines, which shows the locations of many of these individuals. Furthermore, if the leader of a particular community does not himself have great magical abilities, that does not mean that several people who serve that leader do not. An example of this idea is King Thranduil of Mirkwood. Though he is a Warrior with only limited spellcasting abilities, it can be assumed that some followers of the king will have exceptional magical prowess. And these people will certainly inform their leader of any magic disturbance. Note that many of these determinations can be made prior to most playing sessions in order to avoid slowing the game.

After the area of effect and the detecting individuals are determined the GM can refer to the "Spellcasting Detection Table" to determine the outcome of the spell use. A percentile roll is made each time a spell or spell-like power is used, and these rolls are modified by the factors given at the bottom of the table. The explanations for the various parts of the table are as follows:

Level of Sensing Individual: The numbers along the top of this section indicate the column to be used for the percentile roll, based on the level of the person who is detecting the spell or spelllike power.

Modifiers for the Sensing Roll: This section is used to determine the modifications to the percentile roll. Note that with the "Spell Level" and the "Caster's Level" the chance of discovery increases as these levels go up. In addition, the "Area Type" is divided into two categories: population and degree of magical activity. The greater the population the larger the risk, due to the fact that these areas are watched more closely. The inverse is true of the magical activity in an area. If a large amount of magic is used in an area, such as in an Elven community, then the chances of discovery are lessened, due to the masking this other magic provides. And in an area of particularly low magical activity, such as barren wilderness or the Shire, the risks become greater, because any magic-used is very noticeable.

Result of Spellcasting: The information given here has three parts: The first sentence explains what has been sensed (i.e., that a spell has been cast), the general direction from which the power emanated, the approximate distance to the spellcasting, etc. Note that the exact spell that was cast is not sensed, only the level of the spell. The second sentence, far less definitive than the first, gives the general reaction of the individual who senses the spell. This information is presented in the most basic form possible and should always be modified by the GM to fit the exact circumstances. For example, the race or species of the servants sent out should fit the situation, and the reaction given should never create a situation that would be disadvantageous to the detector. Furthermore, if the result is incompatible with the general attitudes of the detecting individual it should be altered or ignored. The third sentence gives a modification for the next spell cast in the same general area. Note that if a great deal of time has elapsed (a few days) this modification can be ignored.

Magic Items in Middle-earth

Closely related to the ideas above are the magic items of Middle-earth. Like the spellcasters themselves, the enchanted items of Endor are somewhat rare and often very potent. Adventuring groups should not in most instances possess a great many magic items without causing significant (and often dangerous) attention to be drawn to themselves. The reason for this attention is twofold. First, as with spellcasting, the use of magic items that duplicate spell effects will have a chance of drawing attention to the user in the same way as if he or she cast that spell (or rough equivalent). And, secondly, magic items such as enchanted weaponry or armor will tend to stand out in most settings. After all, a warrior striding into Bree or even a place like Minas Tirith wearing shining *mithril* mail and a gleaming magic sword will hardly blend in with the commoners. And spies of the Dark Lord or other evil powers will be sure to take notice.

This idea does not mean that a party of adventurers should be prevented from obtaining magical items, but that the use and display of these treasures must be done with great care and restraint, just as the use of spellcasting power must be controlled. It is suggested that the GM usually let the PCs discover these potential hazards for themselves.

Perhaps the best example of this idea can be seen with Aragorn early in *The Lord of the Rings*. Though this Chieftain of the Rangers of the North is one of Middle-earth's most formidable individuals, possessing several items of power as well as substantial spellcasting abilities, he presents himself as a rough-looking vagabond, and rarely openly displays his full power. Though the average PC can never hope to attain the status of Aragorn, the same discreet lifestyle can often prolong the career of any adventurer, as well as make that character a more believable part of Middle-earth.

GMs should be aware that the possession of extremely potent forms of magic, such as a lesser Ring of Power or a particularly famous enchanted sword, can potentially upset the balance of play by either giving the PCs too much power and influence, making the game less challenging, or by creating a situation that the evil powers of the world cannot possibly ignore. In the latter case the PCs would be hunted

SPELL CASTING DETECTION TABLE

Level of Sensing Individual					Result of Spell Casting
10-12	13-15	16-18	19-20	20+	
01-35	01-20	01-15	01-10	01-05	Spell goes unnoticed
36-50	21-30	16-25	11-15	06-10	Spell is sensed, but ignored. +5 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
51-60	31-40	26-35	16-20	11-15	Spell is sensed. The senser becomes wary. +10 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
61-75	41-55	36-45	21-25	16-20	Spell is sensed, but location & distance unknown. Spies sent to locate & report on movements of caster. +10 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
76-85	56-75	46-60	26-35	21-25	Spell & general direction of caster are sensed. Spies sent to find and capture caster. +15 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
86-90	76-85	61-75	36-45	26-30	Spell & general direction of caster are sensed. Minor minions sent to find & capture caster. +15 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
91-95	86-90	76-85	46-50	31-40	Spell, direction and distance are sensed. Minor minions sent to apture caster. +20 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
96-99	91-95	86-90	51-65	41-55	Spell, direction and distance are sensed. Med. level minions sent to capture or slay caster. +20 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
100	96-99	91-95	66-75	56-70	Spell & exact location of caster are sensed. Med. level minions sent to capture or slay caster. +25 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
—	100	96-99	76-85	71-80	Spell, exact location, & power of caster are sensed. High level minions sent to capture or slay caster. +25 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
—	—	100	86-95	81-90	Spell, exact location, & power of caster are sensed. High level minions sent to capture or slay caster. +30 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
—	—	—	96-99	91-95	Spell, exact location & power of caster are sensed. Highest Ranking minions are sent to slay caster. +30 on this table for next spell cast in this area.
100+	100+	100+	100	96-100	Spell, exact location & power of caster are sensed. Leader & minions go to capture or slay caster. +35 on this table for next spell cast in this area.*
—	—	—	100+	100+	Spell, exact location & identity of caster are sensed. Leader will stop at nothing to capture or kill caster. +40 on this table for next spell cast in this area.*

Modifiers for Sensing Roll

Spell Level		Caster's Level		Area Type		Outlook of Sensing Individual	
lst-2nd	No Roll	lst-2nd	NA	Dense Population	+20	Ally	-40
3rd-5th	-10	3rd-4th	-15	[cities, fortresses & vicinity]		Friendly	-20
6th-Sth	0	5th-6th	-10	Average Population	+10	Neutral	0
9th-10th	+10	7th-8th	-5	[towns, farmlands, small keeps]		Unfriendly	+10
llth-13th	+20	9th-10th	0	Low Population [wilderness]	-10	Enemv	+10
14th-16th	+30	11th-14th	+5	High Degree of Magic Activity	-10	Enemy who knows caster	+30
17th-19th	+40	15th-18th	+15	Average Degree of Magic Activity	0		
20th	+50	19th-20th	+25	Low Degree of Magic Activity	+10		
20th+	+70						

*Particularly powerful leaders, such as Sauron or the King of Gondor, will not themselves pursue the caster.

down much as Frodo and his companions were in their journey from the Shire to Rivendell. Of course, the Nine Nazgûl would probably not be sent out after the party, but other nearly as ominous foes could be allotted this task. In keeping with this idea, it is suggested that few if any truly powerful items be potentially obtainable by PCs. After all, when powerful items changed hands in *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit,* such as when Bilbo found the One Ring or when Galadriel gave the Elessar to Aragorn, the history of Middle-earth itself was affected. Only if a GM is prepared to cope with these hazards should such items be obtainable by PCs.

Magic and the Races of Middle-earth

Magic in Middle-earth is viewed by the more common inhabitants as a wondrous and inexplicable thing that is more akin to the Undying Lands than Endor. Or, as in the case of evil sorcery, the Free Peoples see magic as a dark and mysterious power, best avoided at all costs. In both instances magic is never viewed as a common part of everyday life. And in most communities those visitors who are known to use magic will at best be viewed with suspicion.

This general description applies to Endor as a whole, but further explanation of how each race of Middle-earth fits into this scheme can also be useful. The following information can help a GM in determining the reactions of a given society to spellcasters and other magic, and in deciding the likelihood of finding users of magic in a given community. All of the races are followed by a brief description, except Elves, who have a special relationship to the magic of Middle-earth and require more detailed information.

Men

As a general rule, Men distrust magic and its practitioners more so than most races of Middle-earth. This idea is in part due to the fact that magic is more foreign to humans than any other race (except Hobbits), and that Morgoth in the First Age and Sauron in the Second Age have shown Men that sorcery is a tool of Darkness. Very few spellcasters will tend to be found among these people, though all types of magic-users can potentially exist. But because the races of Men vary to a great degree, some exceptions to this idea are present, such as the Dúnedain and the Black Númenóreans. These races, being descendants of Númenor, are more knowledgeable about magic and therefore fear it less than most Men. Several other examples can be found as well, but in most of these communities some connection to magic, such as living in close proximity to Elves, will be present.

Hobbits

Of all the races of Middle-earth, Hobbits avoid magic and spellcasters the most. This attitude exists to a large degree for the same reasons that Men dislike the use of magic. But with Hobbits this feeling is even stronger, because their quiet and peaceful lifestyle does not mix well with Wizards and Mages, and they tend to avoid circumstances that could lead to adventurous activity. For these reasons no Hobbit spellcasters of any type will be found in Middle-earth.

Dwarves

As with the races of Men and Hobbits, magic is in most ways foreign to Dwarves. The only class of pure spellcaster found among this race are Animists. But the one important exception to this idea is the creation of enchanted items. Because Dwarves were made from the very stone foundations of Endor, they have a close affinity to the many magical ores and minerals found within the earth. Furthermore, the Dwarves were created by Aulë, the Smith of the Valar, and gained from their maker an unquenchable desire for creating great works with their hands. These two attributes give Dwarves not only superior ability at forging and metallurgy, but also the knowledge of how to better enhance the natural virtues of the materials used. Therefore, *mithril* mail made by a Dwarf, for example, will exceed the quality of similar armor made by a Man. This difference of quality is due to both the Dwarf's physical skills and his natural knowledge of how to bring out the enchantment of the ore. Note that this ability does not necessarily involve actual spellcasting.

Orcs and Trolls

Members of these two races, including Uruk-hai, Olog-hai, Half-trolls, and Half-orcs, are not typically inclined toward learning the arts of spellcasting or magic item creation. Most individuals do not possess the mental capacity for magic-using professions in the first place. But, unlike the races described previously, Orcs and Trolls have been dominated by powerful spellcasters for much of their history. And they have become, therefore, somewhat accustomed to the use of magic, even though most Orcs and Trolls cannot themselves make great use of it. Though Mages are extremely rare, Animists can occasionally be found among these races.

ELVEN MAGIC

By far the most unique aspect of magic in Middle-earth is the power which is exhibited by the Elves. Though by the Third Age Elven culture in Endor is dramatically waning, the Elves' natural abilities and great skills are still unrivaled by any other people. Much of this power, though viewed as magic by the other races, comes naturally to all Elves, both Eldar and Avari, and is due to the position the Quendi hold as the Firstborn of Ilúvatar.

All the races of Elves have a close affinity to the elements and natural forces of Arda. but at the same time they exhibit a mysterious immunity to these powers. One natural force by which the Quendi are little effected is time. Unlike any other race of Endor Elves are immortal and rarely show signs of aging, and they only tire of Middle-earth after many long centuries. Other forces which seem to effect Elves only peripherally are heat and cold, for they can endure these extremes far easier than the other races of Middle-earth. Similarly, darkness hinders the Quendi little and they can see on a moonlit night as a Man sees on a sunny day, and their sight during daylight hours is far superior to that of a Man. But perhaps the strangest resistance to natural forces shown by the Elves is their perceived levity. Though a true understanding of this characteristic is known only to the Quendi, Men see this trait as enabling the Elves to walk, in essence, on air. This ability is clearly shown when Elves travel silently through a forest without leaving any trace of their passing. And another illustration of this power is shown by Legolas when he demonstrated his ability to walk across the snow on Caradhras without plunging through the surface. All of these traits and powers are used by the Elves in the same way a Man might use his ability to speak, and they seem no more magical to Elves than talking is to a human. But these abilities are regarded by the other races of Endor as strange and inexplicable elements of Elven magic.

Other aspects of the Elves' magical nature are not found in all Quendi and are instead related to the Eldar's close ties to Aman. These powers had two sources. The first was being in the presence of the Two Trees, and the second was living among the Valar themselves. The Noldor who returned to Middle-earth were said to have had the light of the Two Trees shining from their faces, and this affected the Deep Elves in no small way. They tended to be wiser and far more knowledgeable than the Moriquendi. And the Noldor had learned great skills from Aulë and the other Valar during their time in Aman. The power gained by the Noldor is chiefly exhibited in their ability to fashion items of unsurpassable quality as well as great works of power.

But these enhanced characteristics of Elven nature are not restricted to the Noldor. To a lesser degree they are also manifested by the Sindar. Though the Elves of Doriath and their descendants never saw the light of the Two Trees nor lived among the Valar, they did dwell in the presence of Melian (a Maia) and Thingol, both of whom, like the Noldor, had the light of Valinor shining from their eyes. The presence of these two individuals gave the Sindar a wisdom and inner light very similar, though less pronounced, to that of the Noldor.

Perhaps the most well known form of Elven magic is their creation of enchanted articles, both common things and talismans of great power. The Elves are called the Children of the Earth, and, like the Dwarves, the Quendi have a close affinity to the land. But unlike the Naugrim this affinity encompasses all of Arda, including each element as well as the flora and fauna. Due to their close ties to Nature as well as their great knowledge and craftsmanship, the Elves are able to fashion things beyond the skill of Men and Dwarves.

Many powerful creations that required great lore and skillful technique were made by the Elves throughout their years in Endor. And these enchanted items, such as the Rings of Power, the Mirror of Galadriel and the Elessar, were unrivaled in their potency and influence. But magic items such as these, were rare even for the Eldar, and required the maker to use unmatched forging skills as well as powerful enchantments.

More mysterious to the other races of Middle-earth, however, are the lesser, almost common goods which the Elves produce. These items are more mystical to the other races because at first they seem to be nothing more than well made, but otherwise ordinary things. But upon making use of these items, their truly enchanted nature is revealed. One good example of these sorts of Elven goods is the equipment the Fellowship of the Ring received upon leaving Lórien. The Elven cloaks, the rope and even the waybread exhibited the Quendi's ability to make ordinary items in a most extraordinary manner. The cloaks concealed the wearers almost as if they were invisible. The Elven rope could untie itself at the wish of the owner, and the lembas had a renewing quality and was able to sustain a traveler for many days with no other source of food. But unlike the powerful talismans these items are not seen as magical to Elves, and no great spell-craft is required in their making. The "magic" of these more common items comes from the simple fact that they are made by Elves, whose innate power is incorporated into their creations.

The Ships of Belfalas Bay

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During the writing of *Southern Gondor: The People* (*SG:TP*), Gunnar Brolin and I spent a great effort creating a plausible and consistent account for Gondor's and Umbar's sea-faring technology and practices. We used the European Atlantic shipping in the 15th-16th centuries as the foundation, since we believe that the Belegaer is best compared to the Atlantic Ocean and that Gondor's technology in general is at a comparable level.

I noted with surprise the ship drawings of *Southern Gondor: The Land* (*SG:TL*), which had been inserted by ICE without consulting us. These ships bear no relation to the ones described by us in *SG:TP;* instead they are mainly based on Mediterranean designs of the Classical Era and are, in my judgment, unsuitable for the harsh waters of the Bay of Belfalas, lacking both seaworthiness and endurance. I contacted Pete Fenlon to discuss the issue, but we eventually only "agreed to disagree."

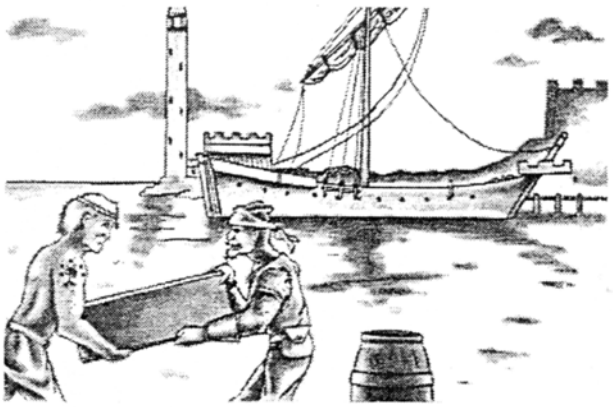
The *SG:TL* ships illustrations do not belong to the vision of Gondor's and Umbar's sea-faring held by the writers of the two *SG* modules. Instead, it is these ship drawings presented here that depict most of the vessels described in *SG:TP*. Some of them, such as the *rochros* (caravel), are based on the designs used by the European countries in the Age of Discovery, and are therefore capable, among other things, of the wide-ranging voyages of discovery that the Dúnedain carried out after Numenor's Downfall. (See *Unfinished Tales.)*

The best guides to the ships of the past are Bjorn Landstrom's lavishly illustrated books, which have served as our primary sources. His works have been translated into English and are found in many American public libraries. The illustrations provided here were based upon Mr. Landstrom's originals.

Rochros (S. "Foam Horse")

The Rochros or caravel is a small ship, used for coastal trade and as a scout ship. Since it is highly maneuverable and relatively fast, it is also used for raids. It cannot stay at sea for a long time.

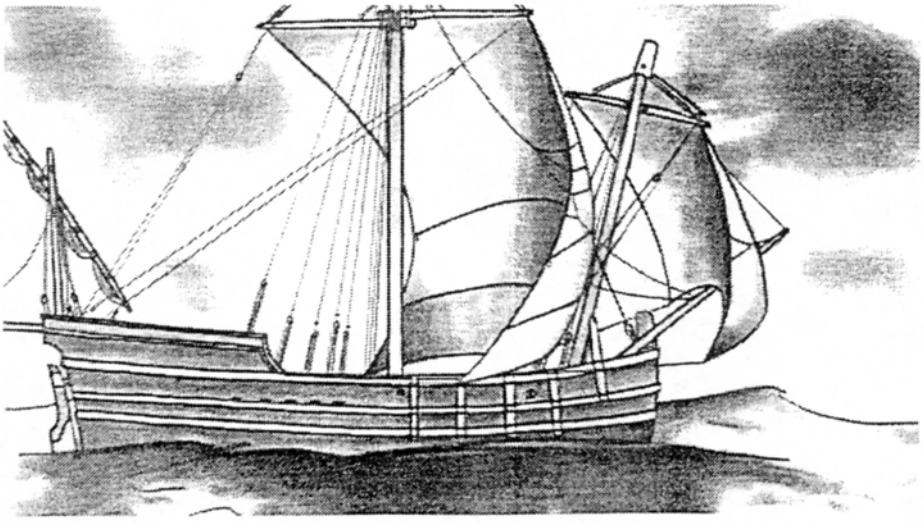
Length overall	75'	
Length of keel	52'	
Width of deck	18'	
Depth	6'	
Ship MB	+5	
Crew		
sailors	25	men
soldiers	30	men
Price	625	gp



Celbar (S. "Home Runner")

The Celbar or cog is a one-masted ship, very common for trade and commercial shipping. A large cargo capacity is emphasized when the ships are built. It is therefore slow, and its fighting capacity is not the best. However, cogs are common, and easily available in times of need. A significant part of the ships raised by the Odo Lynd usually are cogs, even if the statutes speak of other, larger vessels. When serving as a trader, a Cog usually does not have a forecastle.

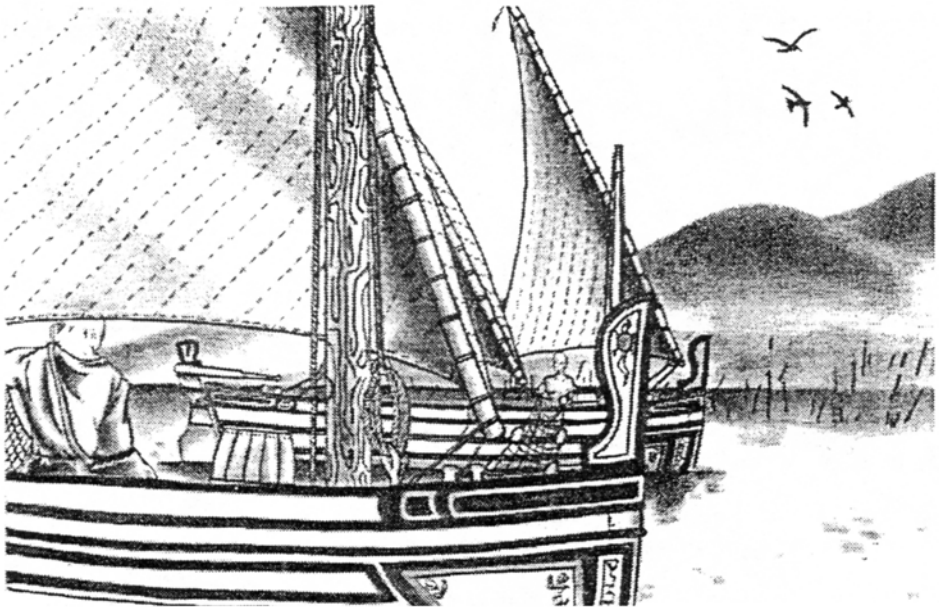
Length overall	90'	
Length of keel	58'	
Width of deck	18'	
Depth	10'	
Ship MB	-10	
Crew		
sailors	15	men
soldiers	20	men
Price	1,100	gp



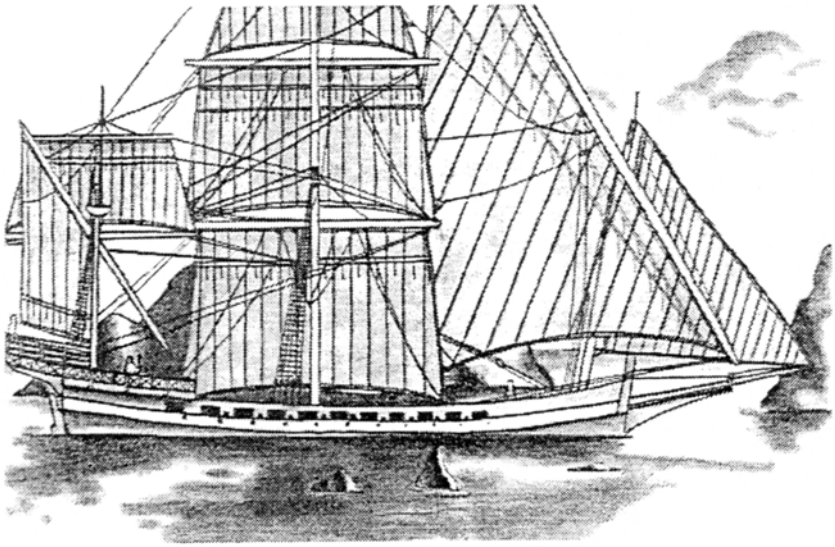
CELFALAS (S. "COAST RUNNER")

The Celfalas or holk is a slightly larger ship than the cog, also built for trade. The main exterior difference is that the holk has a slightly different hull shape, and a second mast with a lateen sail on the afterdeck. The holk seldom has a forecastle while in a civilian role.

Length overall	98'	
Length of keel	65'	
Width of deck	20'	
Depth	10'	
Ship MB	-10	
Crew		
sailors	25	men
soldiers	30	men
Price	1,400	gp



TURWING (S. "MASTER OF THE SEA-SPRAY")*



Crew		
sailors	65	men
soldiers	150	men
Price	2,900	gp

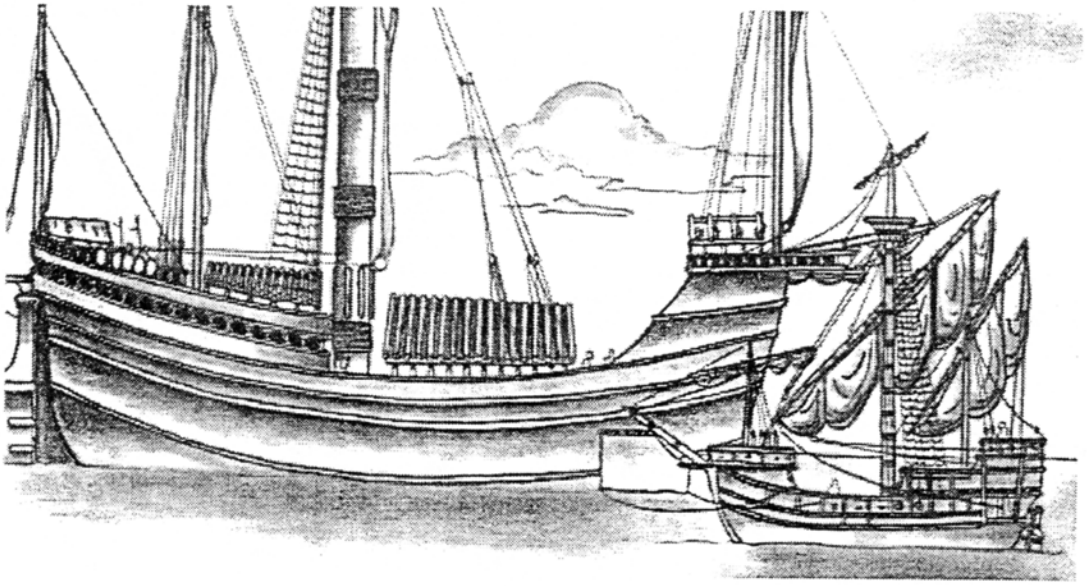
The Turwing or raider (known among the Haruze as a *shebek),* is a typical raiding ship. Due to its slim hull, it is fast, but it cannot stand heavy weather to a great extent. On brief trips, it can take a large number of men, but the cargo capacity is small. Hence, the raider is most commonly found among Umbar's raiding forces. Gondor also has a few for counter raids, and as patrol ships along the coast. Due to its light hull, the raider is not good in battle. It must either try to overpower the enemy (if small) or to outrun him (if large). The raider can be rowed, but it is primarily a sailing ship. °An Umbarean raider is called Draugaer (S. "Sea Wolf") by the Gondorians.

Length overall	80'	
Length of keel	67'	
Width of deck	16'	
Depth	7'	
Ship MB	+ 15	
Crew		
sailors	30	men
soldiers	60	men
oarsmen	50	men
[usually sailors or soldiers]		
Price	800	gp

Cairon (S. "Great Ship")

The Cairon or large carrack is used nearly exclusively as a man-of-war, since it is too large and expensive to be used profitably for trade ventures. But even as a warship it is uncommon, due to its sizable construction cost. It is mainly used as a flagship for a large group of smaller ships. A large carrack may have three or four masts, depending on its size.

Length overall	144'
Length of keel	98'
Width of deck	45'
Depth	14'
Ship MB	-5
Crew	
sailors	120 men
soldiers	300 men
Price	4500 gp



The small carrack is similar to the previous one, though its hull has about the same dimensions as the cogs. These carracks are common, both as traders and as warships. The cargo capacity is smaller than for a cog of the same size, but maneuverability and endurance are better.

Length overall	80'
Length of keel	56'
Width of deck	27'
Depth	9'
Ship MB	±0
Crew	
sailors	40 men
soldiers	80 men
Price	800 gp

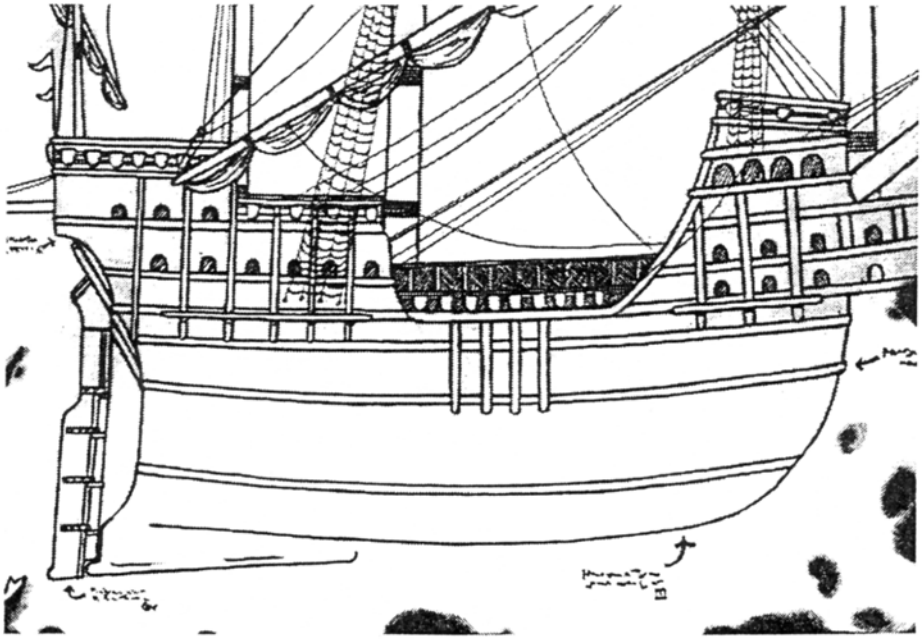
The regular carrack is built on the same theme as the two above models, but it is three-masted. Such large ships are uncommon though. On the other hand, its size and capacity make it popular as a man-of-war. Since it has three masts, it is also more maneuverable than the cog and the holk.

Length overall	125'
Length of keel	85'
Width of deck	34'
Depth	12'
Ship MB	-5

Gaervinas (S. "Sea Tower")

The Gaervinas or galleon is exclusively used as a warship. It has very much the same role as the larger carracks: flagship or a strong backbone in a squadron. In the same way as a large carrack, it may have three or four masts. It is faster than a carrack of the same size, has about the same endurance, but cannot take as many soldiers.

Length overall	136'
Length of keel	100'
Width of deck	33'
Depth	13'
Ship MB	-5
Crew	
sailors	100 men
soldiers	180 men
Price Not for sale	[3600] gp



ARDA LORE

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Is *TheSilmarillion* just a Mannish Myth?

Bernie Roessler

One of the main reasons I have for reading the "History of Middle-earth" series is to gain additional insight and details of the early history of Arda. After five volumes (not counting volumes six through nine which concern *The Lord of the Rings),* I was therefore somewhat dumbfounded upon reading "Myths Transformed" *in Morgoth's Ring.* For those readers who may not have had an opportunity to read the book, "Myths Transformed" presents us with the revelation that Tolkien, after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings,* and near completion of the "Quenta Silmarillion," intended to drastically alter the cosmogony of the Elder Days. To quote Tolkien directly: "It is now clear to me that in any case the Mythology must actually be a 'Mannish' affair. The High Eldar...must have known the 'truth' (according to their measure of understanding). What we have in the *Silmarillion* etc. are traditions...handed on by *Men* in Númenor and later in Middle-arth...blended and confused with their own Mannish myths and cosmic ideas." He continues, "At that point (in reconsideration of the early cosmogonic parts) I was inclined to adhere to the Flat Earth and the astronomically absurd business of the making of the Sun and Moon. But you can make up stories of that kind when you live among people who have the same general background of imagination, when the Sun 'really' rises in the East and goes down in the West, etc. When however (no matter how little most people know or think about astronomy) it is the general belief that we live upon a 'spherical' island in 'space' you cannot do this anymore (MR: 370)."

This, as Christopher Tolkien states on the next page, is certainly "unambiguous enough." A discussion and an unfinished narrative follow in which Tolkien gives us a brief description of the course that the new cosmogony would follow. For example, "the Making of the Sun and Moon must occur long before the coming of the Elves; and *cannot* be made to be after the death of the Two Trees (MR: 375)." Also, "The coming of Men will therefore be much further back (MR: 378)." Further portions of the book concern the kindling of the stars; the nature of Melkor (who "must be made far more powerful in original nature") and his motives; and the nature and origin of Orcs, which may now have been from captured Men rather than Elves.

As you can see, these sections present us with an entirely new conception of how Tolkien later envisioned the making of Arda than we have been accustomed. My reason for mentioning all this is to pose the question: "What are we to make of it?" Since we now know it was Tolkien's definite intent to alter his creation, should we consider this new cosmogony the "true" history of the Elder Days, or adhere to the old version which we have known so long.

Besides the purely literary aspects of discussing this issue, I'm interested in what the official (or semi-official) ICE position is as well. As role players, the answer to this question has important repercussions, and not only for players in the First Age, as I hope to make clear sometime in a future article. Since at least four of ICE's authors are readers of this periodical, perhaps somewhat of a consensus can be reached.

Let me begin the debate (or at least continue it, for it actually began with Tolkien himself) by defending the retention of the old cosmogony as found in the published *Silmarillion.* Perhaps the strongest argument for its retention is that the "Flat Earth" cosmogony was indeed published in the *Silmarillion* nearly twenty years ago, and is well known to most of the readers of Tolkien, whereas the "Myths Transformed" version would be relatively obscure. Another point is that the "Myths Transformed" version was, of course, never completed. Possibly its contemplation could even have been a major reason for the fact that J.RR. Tolkien never actually completed the *Silmarillion.* So against the fairly detailed and completed version that we have for the "Flat Earth" cosmogony we have only a brief description for the new version found in "Myths Transformed."

In addition, as Tolkien himself stated, "One loses, of course, the dramatic impact of such things as the first 'incarnates' waking in a starlit world — or the coming of the High Elves to Middle-earth and unfurling their banners at the first rising of the Moon (MR: 370)." All is not astronomically correct with the new version either, as Christopher Tolkien

mentions, and although I am quoting him somewhat out of context, I feel it is still a valid point. He writes: "why is the Myth of the Two Trees (which so far as the record goes he never showed any intention to abandon) more acceptable than that of the creation of the Sun and the Moon from the last fruit and flower of the Trees as they died? or indeed, if this is true, how can it be acceptable that the Evening star is the Silmaril cut by Beren from Morgoth's crown (MR: 371)?"

Points in favor of the new cosmogony, besides it being J.R.R. Tolkien's later intent, is that it is more consistent with our primary would, not only astronomically but in other aspects as well, which apparently was his main motivation. For example, since there are no long ages without light in Endor, there is no need *for* a "sleep" to be set upon the plants etc. (not to mention some sort of maintenance of a moderate temperature).

Also, as Tolkien indicates, with the coming of Men placed much further back, their depiction in the mythology is easier to explain: "for a bare 400 years is quite inadequate to produce the variety, and the advancement (e.g. of the Edain) at the time of Felagund."

These are the pertinent points of the debate as I see them; perhaps others can present more. For some, the entire debate may seem presumptuous. After all, if J.R.R. Tolkien's opinion regarding the Flat Earth version was that "you cannot do this any more," who are we to challenge the professor in matters of mythology, especially regarding his own creation? Still, and I do not think Tolkien would disagree with this, his creation would not have the power that it does were it not first of all a great story. Since Tolkien did not complete the *Silmarillion* to his own satisfaction, the task fell to other hands—his son's—to finish the story. I doubt that any of us are sorry he did, despite the reservations he has expressed about not including commentary.

Since its publication, *The Silmarillon* has been read by millions and come to be loved by all of us. This completed story has a power that a short outline can never have, and I for one am not ready to give up as being the "true" version.

Just what *did* happen that night on Weathertop?

Bernie Roessler

In a letter in *OH* 10/11, Jason Vester brings up the idea of using "Recurrent Ringwraith" characters in a campaign. One of the reasons he lists for this is that it "reconciles the supposed might of the Nazgûl with their occasional incompetence....These are Sauron's mightiest servants?"

Now I don't think that Jason actually believes that the Nazgûl were incompetent. However, his comments do bring up the point of just why didn't these powerful minions simply seize the One Ring when they had Frodo and company well-nigh at their mercy that night at Weathertop? Of course, besides the four terrified Hobbits, there was also one awesome Ranger present, but I don't think it was Aragorn's actions alone which drove off the Ringwraiths. Aragom himself said "I cannot think why they have gone and do not attack again (FotR: 209)."

So, for a more complete answer we must make the attempt of entering the mind of the Morgul-lord. Since we don't have the luxury of having Mûrazôr's personal memoirs, some of the following is pure speculation. But perhaps it will offer to some a better explanation of that night.

Try to put yourself then, into the Black Captain s boots. Imagine that you have existed now in one form or another for five thousand years. Once you were a powerful Númenórean lord. Indeed, according to the biography in ICE's *Lords of Middle-earth II*, you were the second son of Tar-Ciryatan. By all measures you are proud and vain. Not content with serving your father and brother, you traveled to Middle-earth and soon became a pupil of sorcery under Sauron and the first of the Ring-wraiths.

Although you were at first mortified by the defeat of your master at the end of the Second Age, you soon realized that the most precious One Ring had not been destroyed. As long as the One Ring existed, you knew that your master would again arise, and your desire for revenge of those traitorous Elf-friends would be realized.

So when your master did reappear you quickly returned to his service. You became a mighty king in Angmar and destroyed three realms of the rebel Dúnedain in the North. Your work done there, you took charge in Mordor and soon captured Minas Ithil and a priceless *palantir*, and soon after slew (you believed) the last King of Gondor.

Through the long centuries both you

and your master have believed the One Ring to be lost. But now, beyond all hope, news has arrived this most precious of all items has been found! Quickly, plans are made for a war of conquest, but first you and your fellow Ringwraiths are sent on your most important mission yet: to seek out the One's possessor and return it (and, if possible, him; there is a matter of punishment to be resolved) to Barad-dûr. With unrestrained eagerness you set out after winning a crossing over the Anduin. For two months you wander the Wild with your companions, and your frustration, not to mention your master's wrath, begins to grow (UT: 339). You then are ordered to ride to Isengard, where that treacherous Saruman has news of the One. Then you race to the Baranduin, covering over four hundred miles in five days, where you drive off a guard of Rangers. You then send Khamûl and three other Nazgûl into the Shire, while two more (probably led by Dwar of Waw) are sent to Bree (FotR: 277). Meanwhile, you yourself enter the Barrow-downs, where you arouse the wights that you had sent there fourteen centuries earlier. Your anticipation for finding the One and bringing it to your master for great reward grows daily.

Imagine, then, your ire whenyour companions return empty handed. You are especially angered at Dwar for letting those miserable little Halflings escape into the Chetwood with some long-legged stranger, and berate him in front of the others. Nevertheless, you realize that if the Hobbits are heading eastward, Weathertop would be the ideal place to spot them again. You ride there and wait, when not Halflings but that meddling Grey Wizard appears! After a fierce fight, he flees, and you again send Khamûl and three others to pursue him, while you resume your watch. It gives you, then, the utmost pleasure when the Halflings and the most precious One are again detected. You and your companions then approach their encampment that night. The call of the One grows stronger step by step. You order Dwar and another to stay behind to further chastise him, while you and two others advance towards the Ring. Then one of the little fools plays right into your hands and puts on the Ring. He is yours now, and you can hardly contain your glee. Still, the rat dares to shout that vile curse of "Elbereth" at you, which startles you momentarily as you make your first swing, which pierces the rat, but not where you wanted The next thing to occur, however, is totally unexpected. A being of great power and courage steps up wielding fire. You flinch. Has that grey meddler returned or some powerful Elf-lord? Did the lure of the Ring blind you to his presence? You withdraw. The other Ringwraiths await your word. "Who was that guy boss? Should we move in and get them again?" You see Dwar standing silently to the side. Your pride will not let you admit you retreated before a mere mortal.

"No," you say, "I have accomplished what I desired to do. The Halfling with the One has been pierced by a Morgul-knife. We need now only play them like a fish on a line. It will be great sport."

Well, that's my explanation for that night. One other point is that Nazgûl all seem less powerful the farther they are from Mordor (or some other fixed locus of power, such as Carn Dûm). For example, Gandalf was able to hold off all nine Ringwraiths at Weathertop, but had grave doubts about being able to stop the Morgul-lord at Minas Tirith. Glorfindel drove away three at the Bridge of Mitheithel (FotR: 222) and the Rangers held off all nine *until* dark at Sarn Ford. (UT: 341) This is not something that was previously mentioned in "The General Powers and Features of the Nazgûl" in ICE's *Lords of Middle-earth*, but is definitely an aspect that needs to be explored.

Were there schools in Middle-earth?

Tommy Martin

Someone once asked me if I thought there was a Hobbit school in the Shire. I don't think there would be, since the Hobbits were primarily agricultural, which would leave the responsibility of education in the hands of the family— education concerning matters of planting or the family trade, etc. But what about elsewhere in Middle-earth? Is there a University in Minas Tirith, was there one in Fornost Erain, or was there a form of school in Tharbad or Bree?

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Adam Miller responds:

I think any schools in Middle-earth would be private, or run by guilds. I don't think Tolkien meant for the governments of Middle-earth to run public schools. Being private, they would pop up where needed; a lot of the time, informally. For example, Rivendell might be seen as a school of sorts, because anyone they let in was free to use its knowledge resources. In Minas Tirith, guilds could have set up any number of schools for training people in a particular field.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Dave Craft responds:

There might be an "official" answer to this sort of thing, but I imagine a practical guess can be found by looking at European history. Those of us in modernized cultures have a tendency to think of widespread education as being a natural thing; historically, this isn't so. The only persons who got any formal education were the rich and the ruling class. For the same reason they were obligated to run the state, either from a governmental or economic viewpoint, and needed to know how. Thus, education was often one-on-one, and sometimes several-on-one. There was certainly not the widespread educational apparatus that exists in the US, for example.

It's highly unlikely, I'd think, that there were universities (or other major centers of learning) in Middle-earth at any point in its history. There was simply no need for them, except very possibly at some of the historic heights of civilization. There were simply too few people who actually needed to know the types of information a university is intended to provide (history, mathematics, geography, to name a few), and thus probably would not have had enough "teachers" to go around.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Georg Donde responds:

Actually, European universities came into existence quite early: as far back as the 9th to the 10th centuries. They were all located in the major cities, and, of course, existed primarily to teach theology (although astronomy, mathematics, etc. were not neglected). Given that the Catholic Church was primarily responsible for the initial establishment of the centers of learning (though they soon escaped its control, to a degree), it would be difficult to justify the existence of such in Middle-earth, except, maybe, those places where organized religion holds sway. (Sauronic centers of education? Hmmmm....) Of course some intellectual Gondorian king (of which there were a few) could have founded a school himself; or one of the more enlightened Princes of Dol Amroth or such....

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Mark Thorne responds:

Adam Aliller's points above are pretty good. There were no "public schools" at all really. Education would all be conducted by the parents for the vast majority of the populace, and the things taught would concern only the basic necessities of life for that family, whether it be trade, farming, herding, weaving, etc. Guilds also would run one-on-one apprenticeships with their charges. Any educational facility would by its very nature be quite specialized.

It should be noted (as Georg did) that, historically speaking, "higher education" and universities emerged for religious reasons rather than the desire to educate the masses. An educated populace was/is often seen as a dire threat to a government.

It is evident to me from my probing readings into Southern Gondor: The People that Chris Seeman is really trying to push the presence of "things religious in nature" in Gondor, which I commend him for. In almost every past MERP book, the subject is just kind of swept under the rug, which is not realistic. Because of Chris' treatment of it—at least in Gondor—I can easily see how a university could arise at an appropriate place. (I chose Minas Ithil because they were described as more intellectual people in the *Minas Ithil* city book.) How religiously connected that university would be I don't know though. That's a very good question. Unlike the Catholic Church, the Dúnedain never really had a priesthood or pastorate or anything like that.

I wonder if Dol Amroth (Lond Ernil) had anything other than guild teaching?

As for Hobbits, the young were most likely trained by their parents and extended family in whatever they would need to live a respectable, Hobbit-like existence. No doubt the Tooks and a few other families placed a greater importance on preserving records and facts, etc., but no formal schooling at all, I'd think.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Chris Seeman responds:

In drawing upon real-world historical analogies for imagining what Middle-earth might have been like, it is important to contextualize the categories one uses. For example, while it is true that the European university emerged within (or because of) a religious framework, it does not necessarily follow that the dynamics or institutional "needs" of "religion" will be the same in Middle-earth. Religious mediation among the Dúnedain of Gondor was performed not by a separate ecclesial institution, but by the king, who was responsible for embodying the lore and traditions of the past. As I see it, one of the principal "needs" of such a cultically grounded polity would therefore be the preservation of knowledge and memory of such lore. This means that scholars, scribes, loremasters, and the like would fulfill a very important societal role, especially since (as Tolkien mentions somewhere) the aristocracy was not, as a rule, all that interested in delving into its Númenórean past, so fraught with tragedy and sorrow for them. This last point, it seems to me, is the more important one: given the fact that there are institutions in Gondor for the transmission and preservation of lore, what social position did their members occupy? With which political forces were they aligned? Whence did they derive their legitimacy? And so on.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Mike Edly responds:

Umbar was established long before the fall of Númenor, and it was the primary Númenórean colony in Middle-earth, so it's possible that it had a great store of Númenórean lore — at least for some time after the Downfall. Later wars and other disasters may have destroyed the Umbarean libraries, like the fires destroyed Alexandria.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Mark Thorne responds:

Given the fact that Umbar was the premier Númenórean colony, it would by default contain much Númenórean lore. Also, given the fact that it was the primary conduit for Númenor s later tributary system, I would suspect that it also would by default have once contained large amounts of information and lore on many of Middle-earth's indigenous populations. Perhaps some of the more culturally advanced peoples of Middle-earth even had embassies of sorts in Umbar, I don't know. But that's another topic.

Anyway, the point I'm trying to make is that I don't think there would ever have been a university in Umbar, not that there weren't libraries or "lore centers" and such. Since university-type education existed almost exclusively for the elite, where better to send the elite than straight back to the elitist place of all, Númenor itself? And most of the elite in Númenor would have most likely been raised in Númenor anyway, at least early on in her colonial history. For these reasons, there wouldn't be a need for a university in Umbar, and also because no indigenous inhabitant of Middle-earth would have any sort of access to this type of facility.

The concept of public education was only started back in the 1800s by some guy from Boston. Before that, all education was either done in-home or at very private education institutions (i.e. Harvard, William & Mary College, etc.). And, then again, only during the mid- to late-Middle Ages did that phenomenon arise. But I wholeheartedly agree about there being storehouses of lore and knowledge in pre-Third-Age Umbar. The Library of Alexandria analogy could be quite valid in fact. Off the top of my head, I would say that around 1640 T.A., the only places in Middle-earth that would have anything even remotely resembled a "university" would be Minas Ithil and Fornost.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Mike Edly responds:

I see Mark Thorne's point about the colonialists returning to Númenor for education and such, but it seems to me that "elite" is a somewhat relative term. The Númenórean elite would have access to Númenor, but the elite of other cultures would be happy to leam Númenórean lore, regardless of the locale. In any case, they might not be able to afford the cost of traveling beyond Umbar, and they would be forced to take what they could get.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Doug Pearson responds:

I would think that there would be more centers of learning for Elves than just Rivendell and Ost-in-Edhil west of Moria for the simple reason that Elves live so long. They also have a natural love of learning and a desire to create and also a desire to preserve the past that all comes together to promote learning. I'm not sure if all learning centers would have to have large collections of written materials, since there would be individuals around that had actually lived through most of the important events of the past. In any case, other centers besides the above two could be Lórien, the Halls of Thranduil in (what was then) Greenwood the Great, and Mithlond (the Grey Havens of Círdan the Shipwright). This last one could be a major center because of its age (founded in the first year of the Second Age) and the age of Cirdan himself.

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
Adam Miller responds:

Regarding education in Middle-earth I am led to the following conclusions: 1) most "lore centers" were probably large libraries erected by the government in big cities, or small private ones set up almost anywhere; 2) there were probably not very many (if at all) big universities, most people just relying on independent studies in the big libraries; 3) we shouldn't rule out the possibility of "elementary" type schools, where rich families would send their children to learn history, writing, reading, etc. (they had that type of stuff even in ancient Rome); 4) wars, the Plague, etc., would lead to the demise or destruction of these institutions, and until Aragorn became king, the government probably did little to replace or repair these places, being more concerned with military matters...

WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN MIDDLE-EARTH?
***Mark Thorne respond*:**

I'm not sure that any of the elite of native cultures would be trained by Númenóreans: at least this would probably be true later in the Second Age. The books say that when the Númenóreans first landed on the shores of Middle-earth, they came as explorers and teachers. Perhaps early on in the Second Age, when Númenor was at its true intellectual height, they at times

established "field schools" to teach the indigenous peoples about their culture and they trained them in whatever things thev wanted to teach them. Now there's a plausible idea. But time period would be the deciding factor in my mind, because later on, Númenor was mostly just interested in how much tribute they could extract from their colonies.

What was the original name for the Hornburg?

Chris Seeman:

As we all know, the Hornburg, the fortress where Tolkien set the famous battle of Helm's Deep in *The Lord of the Rings*, was in origin a Gondorian citadel, long in existence before the Rohirrim ever settled the green fields of Calenardhon. Tolkien never disclosed its original (Sindarin) name.

However, in UT: 371, Tolkien states that it was only called the Hornburg AFTER the death of Helm Hammerhand (who also gave his name to the defile whose entrance the fort guarded), and that prior to this time the Rohirrim had called it Súthburg (OE. "South Fortress"). To my mind, it seems very likely that this was, in fact, the meaning of its original Gondorian name — south of what, if not the neighboring Gondorian fortress of Angrenost? — and that the Rohirrim simply translated it into their own language (as they did with all the other extant Gondorian place-names of Calenardhon). If this is a valid assumption, then the original proper name of the fort would have been Harnost (on the model of Angrenost, Fornost).

In the now out-of-print *Isengard and Northern Gondor* module, ICE (or that module's author) apparendy missed this reference, and chose rather to render Hornburg into Sindarin as Ostiras, "Fortress-tower" (with *tiras* probably intended as *tir(ith)* + *ras* "guard-point," interpreting "horn" on the analogy of *Caradhras* "Redhorn," the name for one of the mountain peaks above Moria). In the light of Tolkien's above mentioned comment, however, this seems to be doubly mistaken, since "Horn" is plainly an allusion to Helm's Horn, rather than to a mountainous spire or pinnacle.

Happily, the error may be ascribed without difficulty to a misinformed Gondorian scribe of the late Third or early Fourth Age, who knew that it had originally been a Gondorian foundation, but who knew only the "modern" name and assumed it: a) to have been a translation of the original, and b) to have alluded to a mountain-like "horn" rather than to a horn that one blows.

Was Harondor Forested? (Response to Wesley Frank, OH 12: 42-43)

Dirk Brandhorm

I would certainly share Wesley Frank's view in assuming large parts of Harondor originally (i.e., under the "natural"[1] conditions of a warm temperate climate) to have supported a significant forest cover. But just how much of it would have been left at the end of the Third Age, when Tolkien on his LotR-map labels Harondor as "now a debatable and desert land," is an entirely different matter. That some change from the original condition had occurred by then is clearly indicated by Tolkien's use of the adverb "now." So, we may ask, when did this change occur and how dramatic was it? Was it sudden? Was it gradual? What were the reasons that brought it about?

If, in order to answer these questions, we take a brief look at processes of desertification in our own world—always the primary source also for our secondary creation — we find in essence that, on a regional scale, overexploitation of resources really is the crucial factor. Along with Wesley, of course, we may assume that "healthy societies" (however you wish to define such a term[2]) generally care to preserve at least those resources that are of any importance to them.

But even taking for granted the absence of internal pressure on the socio-ecological system over a very long period of time, massive interference from outside very rapidly can destroy any such equilibrium. This is most clearly demonstrated by the effect Greek and Phoenician colonization had on the Mediterranean forests, especially in Anatolia and Iberia, which together with California are named by Wesley as examples of sites that in our world on the seaward slopes of their coastal mountain ranges would support Harondor-sryle forests. However, the forests present on the respective sites in Iberia and Anatolia today are almost entirely the result of rather recent campaigns of reforestation. Now it is your guess what California would look like today, had the Greeks or Phoenicians settled there and cut timber for their fleets, or had Philipp II of Spain got actual access to its forests while building his Great Armada to invade England with. Granted, as the natives there didn't posses any livestock, the effect might not have been as dramatic as it was in the Mediterranean, but you give the locals some goats or sheep and they'll finish what's left.

If we look at the likelihood for similar developments in the history of Middle-earth, the primeval forests — for the area that later was to become Harondor we may imagine giant cedars and the like — would have to pay a heavy toll ever since the Númenóreans started to establish dominions on the coast, quite apart from whatever the local natives might have done. This would be especially true from the time when "Umbar is made into a great fortress of Númenor" in SA2251, and would worsen with the building of Pelargir in SA 2350 (although much of the timber needed for the latter would have come from the southern slopes of the Ered Nimrais).

It is not easy to estimate the amount of timber contributed by the forests of would-be Harondor during the Great Armament (SA 3310-3319), but Ar-Pharazôn's fleet-building program must have used an incredible quantity of wood and could not feasibly have been realized with timber from the forests of Númenor alone. Also, it seems rather unlikely that the ruling elite of the island would have simply done away with their leisure hunting grounds. Much of the shipbuilding-material here must without doubt have come from Middle-earth. Harondor, being part of the "hinterland" of Umbar, as well as of Pelargir, would have been a natural choice for cutting timber in a big way. Later on, during the Third Age, the Kin-strife and the ensuing wars of Gondor with the Corsairs of Umbar once more would promote shipbuilding activity on both sides and, as a consequence, lead to renewed large-scale lumbering in Harondor—especially for Umbar, Harondor is the only substantial source for shipbuilding material, unless of course you want to assume a large-scale import of timber from beyond the Haradwaith.

On the other hand, the potential degree of recovery of the forest is certainly a matter open to debate. While in temperate, reasonably humid climates, and in areas exempt from use as pasture the forest may soon return, under semi-arid conditions a restoration of the forest-cover usually turns out to be very difficult to say the least.[3] It is not only the total amount of rain which is important here, but also the general pattern of precipitation. The rainfall Harondor is likely to get from its geographical position probably would not be evenly distributed over the year; instead, most of it would come down during the winter-months as strong downpours, frequently even as torrential rainstorms. Such winter rainfalls, if following a period of large-scale clearing of woodland, would wash away from the

hillsides much of the fertile soils, the latter to be deposited in basins and eventually in the deltas of the major rivers, leaving behind deep ravines and other typical features of intensive erosion.

What you get then is, in effect, a dry savanna likely to develop into secondary scrubland in places which are not grazed upon for some time, with minor remains of the original forest only in very remote areas, whence timber could not be rafted to the coast. In such a scenario—certainly at the close of the Third Age —you end up with much of the hilly interior of Harondor south of the Emyn Laer transformed into barren badlands, poor pasture, separating oasis-like settlements with irrigation-based subsistence agriculture along perennial rivers.

The general deterioration of the landscape also would lead to unrest among the Haruze tribes, to increased migration pressure and much increased competition for pastures. I am not even sure if the Dark Lord's minions would have to raise a finger in order to channel this unrest into mounting pressure on Gondor's southern borders in such a way as the one described by Luke Potter for the Balchoth of the Talath Harroch (OH 12). As far as I can see, in Harondor you don't have to deteriorate the climate by magical means to waste people's subsistence. Dúnedain shipbuilders and Haruze livestock eventually will do the work for you: just bide your time, and when the inevitable crisis peaks, seize the opportunity and hold on for the ride.

1. "Natural" is meant here to indicate the absence of Mannish (or Elvish, or Dwarven) interference with the ecosystem concerned. Even under such "natural" conditions, however, a population of, say, *mûmakil* unchecked by Mannish (or Elvish, or Dwarven) predators—and, we may take it, almost or completely without natural enemies—most certainly would have devastating effects on any closed forest-cover.

2. Personally I would prefer to speak of "stable" societies (i.e., of societies forming part of a "stable" ecosystem). The notion of stability here is, of course, a relative one, and should not be taken to indicate a complete absence of change.

3. Even in zones with temperate climate, potential and actual extension of forests usually don't coincide. Much of the foothills of the Ered Nimrais as well as of the Misty Mountains probably were used as highland pasture by Dunnish tribes, considerably restricting the actual extension of closed forest-cover.

What is the nature of Magic in Middle-earth?

Marcus Wevers

To understand the nature of magic in Middle-earth one has to go back to the creation of Arda, the world in which Middle-earth is set. In *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien tells the reader about Eru Ilúvatar and the Ainur who later on became known as the Valar. They created the world with a music that reflects the Ainur's and Eru's thoughts: their individual nature resides in the music, created by their harmonious and unanimous playing of individual melodies and based on three different themes proposed by Eru. The entire history and future of Arda are encapsulated in this Great Music. Thus, the power of the mind, the spoken word, and music which create a world constitute the original form of magic in Middle-earth.

An important aspect is the personality or aura of the creator. Everything made by an Ainur or Eru himself is strongly associated with them and contains a part of their personality. A very evident example is the Ruling Ring. Since it was forged by Sauron himself in the Sammath Naur of Mordor, it holds a part of the evil nature of its master. After his defeat at the end of the Second Age, Sauron is no longer able to recall his former shape because too much of his inert power lies locked in this powerful ring.

Nature itself was deeply influenced by the Valar in the first ages. Magical changes are not achieved by "classic" incantations, nor by spells that draw upon power or energy of some sort to bring about alterations. Instead, the changes are actually identical to the thoughts and emotions of the Valar. Magic is not separate from Nature, but should be accepted as being a part of the nature that resides within all of Arda.

Every intelligent creature on Arda— consciously or subconsciously—possesses the ability to use this (hidden) magic. Elves were the first to learn this from the Valar, and they evolved a natural way of living with the magic that surrounded them. Mankind (especially the Númenóreans) learned about this way from the Elves, but those Men who remained in Endor were often excluded from it or instructed by servants of Morgoth.

In the course of time, and during many wars against Morgoth and his foremost servant Sauron, the Elves retired gradually from Middle-earth and much knowledge was lost. Their former natural abilities became strange, mystical powers in the eyes of people living in Arda, especially Men and Hobbits. Just as our world, Tolkien's world develops in the eye of the beholder and acquires the character of the miraculous, as when the Hobbits encountered Gildor and his followers "...the hobbits could see the starlight glimmering on their hair and in their eyes. They bore no lights, yet as they walked a shimmer, like the light of the moon above the rim of the hills before it rises, seemed to fall about their feet (LotR: 95)."

Two kinds of magic can be distinguished: firstly, natural magic, including also the "true," incomprehensible (classic) magic, and secondly, tangible, artifactual magic. *The Lord of the Rings* is full of examples showing the magical power of items such as the palantiri, the Elven cloaks, or weapons like Gandal's sword Glamdring.

Natural magic usually encompasses all other kinds of magic because it is the source of all power. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as a form of communication between the creation of Eru and the person who wants to change it. Tolkien uses a personification of Nature, even the part which we normally would call inanimate. For example, the cruel mountain Caradhras overcomes the fellowship of the Ring; Gandalf says about Dwarves: "iron [is] their servant" (LotR: 335). This "communication" is basically the mediation of magic, and may be treated as control over the nature of a thing. Tom Bombadil, for instance, frees the Hobbits in the Old Forest from Old Man Willow by such power (LotR; 135); Elrond controls the river Bruinen (LotR: 240).

The word of command is of major importance in "true" magic. Words and songs (especially in former ages) are the most powerful forces. True magic could be defined as *the act of altering something against its will*. Every being reacts according to its own will. A possible interpretation of true magic is this: if Gandalf desires fire to take a certain shape, he commands it to do so "naur an edraith ammen!" (LotR: 308), whereby it assumes a changed appearance ("green and blue flames..." ibid). If the target (in this case, fire) proves resistant to the command, it becomes more difficult to subdue and maintain control of it. This kind of wizardry is rather exhausting. Hence, Gandalf gets tired in Moria (LotR: 344, 348). However, it is not possible to alter something against its nature: "I can't burn snow!" (LotR: 309). If two wizards are trying to control something simultaneously, they are actually battling each other: Gandalf fighting the Balrog in Moria (LotR: 345); his duel with Sauron (LotR: 421, 517).

It is not always necessary to cast a spell or actually "do" magic, as magic is everywhere. An item, for instance, is shaped by its history and its maker, even

(if one wishes) gaining actual sentience or life. For example, Boromir's horn in Moria: "loud the challenge rang and bellowed, like the shout of many throats....For a moment the Orcs quailed..." (LotR: 348).

Artifactual magic is very important in *The Lord of the Rings*. In most cases, true magic is bound up with some sort of item: Gandalf uses his staff to control fire and light (LotR: 316, 327). The staff serves as a focus of control and is a symbol of power, which Saruman loses when he is revealed to be a traitor by Gandalf: "your staff is broken" (LotR: 607). Furthermore, Gandalf is also the wearer of Narya, the Elven Ring of Fire. Galadriel, the Lady of Lórien, is likewise the guardian of an Elven ring: Nenya, the Ring of Water. She also possesses a mirror capable of opening a vision to Frodo. The western door to Moria represents artifactual magic combined with the power of words.

The only true wizards are the Istari. The *Lord of the Rings* names five: Saruman, Gandalf, Radagast, and two others. The Witch-king of Angmar and the Necromancer of Dol Guldur, as opposites of the Istari, receive different and very much contrasting names. In this way the other side of magic to which they belong is expressed: the "black" magic of Sauron's master Morgoth.

This sorcery has its origins in despair, hatred, and darkness. It ensnares, enslaves, and frightens its enemies. Its effects are available only to those who submit to its power. Sorcery, however, derives from the Void into which Morgoth was banished: it devours itself and creates bodiless, mindless creatures which have their existence on that plane.

Instead of giving life, Melkor (who subsequently became Morgoth) corrupted and destroyed everything shaped by his fellow Ainur. He succeeded in breeding grotesque creatures of Elven stock — Orcs — in order to imitate the Elder Children of Ilúvatar. The power he used could only destroy and oppress. A character's soul is changed and vanquished by the pain of the Void and the emptiness of his or her own deeds. This power has only one goal: "to rule them all....and in the darkness bind them."

Nature reacts according to the kind of magical control exercised upon it. If Nature is corrupted against its will, the process can lead to disastrous results. Greenwood the Great is corrupted into Mirkwood by Sauron's presence in Dol Guldur; quite the opposite is Galadriel, whose presence gives Lórien peace and light to become a blooming dreamland; other examples include Fangorn, the Old Forest, Mordor, Orthanc, and Moria. Sauron even gains control of the weather: all of Mordor breathes the foul air of its master.

Nature's reaction is mirrored in other events as well: Orodruin erupts when the power in Barad-dûr was shaken (LotR: 981); the storm during the battle of the Hornburg begins just in time, as if summoned by Saruman.

Words can also reveal facets of Nature and may create a powerful effect in themselves. Consider, for example, Gandalfs appearance in Fangorn: "Aragorn felt a shudder run through him at the sound....it was like the sudden bite of a keen air....'Let us sit down and be more at ease.'.... Immediately, as if a spell had been removed, the others relaxed and stirred" (LotR: 515). The name of Varda herself, Elbereth Gilthoniel, functions like a benediction to those in dire need.

Persons associated with magic (like Gandalf, Elrond, or Galadriel) have the power to lead and command others. Such "Wizardry" includes not only magical abilities, but also political intrigue and power struggle, manifested (for instance) in the cock's cry during the siege of Minas Tirith "recking nothing of wizardry or war, welcoming only the morning that in the sky far above the shadows of death was coming with the dawn" (LotR: 861). But in contrast to the dark powers, individuals such as these do not rule by brute force and oppression, but rather by the help of the knowledge they offer to others (e.g., the White Council). The Nazgûl, on the other hand, do not use powerful spells, but instead embody the despair and fear which their victims experience.

Knowledge (or the power a person possesses) may often serve as a substitute for magic. Saruman's great power is not only in his wizardry (control of the forces of Nature) but more specifically in his voice, which enables him to convince people to do what he wants. He even deceived the White Council (cf. LotR: 600). The power wielded by such an individual is almost physical and creates a kind of aura. Gandalf, Galadriel, and Strider may appear strong and powerful at will (when they show their true selves). This demonstrates the importance of the character and origin of a person (e.g., the healing hands of the king: Aragorn). Even magicians use instruments other than magic: Gandalf relies on Glamdring as well as on his staff.

Despite all this, the magic of Middle-earth is not as explicit as in other magical worlds. This quality stems from the strange nature of Middle-earth and from the beings that inhabit it. The reader gets the impression of a fascinating, magical world which seems unknown at first, but well known afterwards. Tolkien identifies the reader with the perspective and vision of his characters, as when Frodo beholds Lothlórien (LotR: 368) or when Gimli tells of the Glittering Caves. Tolkien uses comparisons and evokes parallels that unveil a hidden dimension of Nature: Gondolin is situated in a vale that seems to have been created by a huge axe of the Valar; Saruman's tower of Orthanc is described as "riven from the bones of the earth in ancient torment of the hills" (LotR: 578). In my opinion, this type of narration is responsible for most of the magic surrounding Middle-earth.

How may this kind of magic be represented in a role playing game? A gamemaster might try to use the same technique as Tolkien used in his books. First of all, Wizards are rarely to be encountered. Secondly, many things are "magical" *because* they are unknown. The easiest way to achieve this is a style of narration that concentrates on personifying and mystifying Nature. Gamemasters who employ this technique throughout an adventure don't have to rely on a magic system to create the feel of magic in Middle-earth. In my opinion, the division of magic into two kinds—as done in the *MERP* rules—is not useful. It is even worse to have lists of spells, which destroy every bit of atmosphere and imagination due to their immaculate structure.

Situations and words may create a magical atmosphere, depending on the person. It should never be forgotten that a large part of the magic contained in artifacts and certain locations derives from their history and background. An artifact should therefore never lack a legendary background or history. The gamemaster may adapt Nature to his or her descriptions. For example, the cool and clear water of a well may enhance the vision of a man who quenches his thirst, leading him to desire to stand close to the shore and watch Elven ships sailing into the West, afterwards to feel calm and refreshed, as if Ulmo himself held his protecting hands over him.

Especiallv when "dark creatures" are encountered, a proper style of narration is much more important than rules and stats. The gamemasters words must create the impression of fear and dark power in the players' minds. In Tolkien's world, nearly everything has a mystical glamour which the gamemaster might imitate: sixth sense, fears, visions, or dreams may often be used more effectively than "Detect Ambush" spells! The characters may also be blessed by the Valar: a star or the moon may rise at the right moment, etc.

There are two kinds of persons endowed with magic abilities: those who use natural talents (Elves, Dúnedain, Woses) and those who willingly learn to exercise control (magicians and wizards). Real magicians should choose a sphere of control, like the forces of Nature (fire, water, weather, etc). A magician choosing to control creatures (e.g. Radagast) should not be called a magician in Tolkien's sense of the word (but may be an Istar or Wizard). "Wizard" is the true name for people who exert their power and use natural abilities. Certain spheres of magic should not consist of "spells." Radagast was an Istar, but devoted himself to the study of animals. His magic focused on the control of these creatures. Other spheres should also be treated as control-magic. Classic spell-magic (like locking doors, etc.) should not exist in this form, but may be countered by artifactual magic (like Dwarven runes, Elven cloaks etc.).

Spell lists (let's return to *MERP*) should be more flexible. A magician-player should not concentrate on spells possessed according to the game rules, but should use them as a measure of power and strength. Wizards in Middle-earth should rather be represented by their personality, wisdom, knowledge (and the dangerous search for it), and the resulting power.

There are two prime dangers to wizards, correctly stated in the *MERP* rules: first of all, the watching eye of Sauron and, second, the chance to be corrupted by the power of true magic. Another aspect is the suspicion most people feel towards wizards. "Do not meddle in the affairs of Wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger" (LotR: 97). Words are a strong weapon of wizards. Used in the right way, they can have magic-like effect. They give power and control over normal people and may cloak or unveil things to the mind.

I would suggest treating anything that can be interpreted as "control" as true magic; everything else should be treated as the characters' special abilities or skills. Control spheres include fire, air, water, light, weather, sounds, and the mind (humanoid, animal, and plants). "Illusions" may be interpreted as control of the mind or the capacity to appear differently. Incantations are also difficult, but may be treated the same way as prayers: counterspell forces (i.e. Valar or the dark forces of Melkor). Banning or counterspells may assume the form of a duel, like that of Gandalf and the Balrog.

Natural magic is everywhere. The gamemaster may use it even with non-magical characters. The player experiences this magic through the perception of his or her character and the gamemaster's ability to depict Middle-earth.

Bards can be easily introduced to magic, since the power of words and song is the most original form of magic described by Tolkien. Someone who knows about the power and meaning of songs and ballads can put emotions into a performance and achieve marvelous effects. The subject and story of the music comes to life in the minds of the listener. A beautiful example of this from Elrond's house is: "At first the beauty of the melodies and of interwoven words in Elven-tongues....held him like a spell .... Almost it seemed that the words took shape, and visions of far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined opened out before him...." (LotR: 249).

Knowledge is never gained by way of magical means! The classic "Detect Magic" spells should be treated as a skill the wizard has learned in the course of long study. It is also nonsense to speak of true magic in connection with Nature (especially with respect to Animists and Rangers). Gandalf says "Elrond is a master of healing" (LotR: 237), not "he knows some useful spells." Aragorn has the healing hands of a king that enable him to use the healing powers *athelas*. No Elf casts a spell first before moving silently and elegantly through the trees. Skills may be very well developed, and may be combined with or even have their origin in some form of natural magic, but are never to be understood as "magic" in the worlds of different game systems.

Everyone should certainly choose for himself or herself how much to stick to Tolkien's novel. There is always the possibility of saying: "OK, I want a fantasy Middle-earth with real magic in which I can play my characters just the same way as in other worlds but with a different background." In that case there's nothing wrong in taking *MERP* as a game system; but I would not call that a Middle-earth Tolkien would have thought of.

In this essay I have tried to interpret magic in a new way. I am very much interested in your opinion on whether the way magic is represented in role playing important to you or do you ignore it? Please feel free to write to me at: Lengsdorfer Hauptstr. 69 C, D-53127 Bonn, Germany

(wevers@plumbum.chemie.uni-bonn.de)
[Note: This piece was first published as an article in *Windgeflüster* 27 (October 1994); translation by Marcel Bülles, 1996; The quotations are from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* George Allen & Unwin (One Volume-Paperback edition). Tolkien's books published after his death are not included in my research. Therefore material from the "History of Middle-earth" has not been drawn upon.]

How Does Middle-earth Magic Translate into *Rolemaster*?

John Feil

It would seem that how magic works in the Tolkien universe is of great interest to the scholars that write for this magazine. I see that there are "purists" who wish to role-play in a universe which is exactly like Tolkien's, and "borrowers" which take the Tolkien flavor and put it into their own universe. These people have differing needs in their magic systems.

For purists, current gaming products do not provide them with the unique flavor of the trilogy, as 1) there is the possibility of way too many mages floating around, basically increasing the "magico-technological" level of the world, and 2) Tolkien's special effects are virtually eclipsed by the special effects of the *RM* or *De3D* magic systems, where fireballs and lightning bolts are common occurrences. This means that, if *MERP* players wish to aim toward a purist style, they should really rethink their magic rules to be, in my opinion, a more racially-oriented system.

In Dirk Brandherm's article, he makes references to the effect that Gandalf knew spells from the Elves and Dwarves and Orcs, intimating a separate realm of knowledge for each race, and, in Wesley Frank's article, the author also says some things about Dwarves chanting to make impenetrable walls and Elves inscribing power into swords. This indicates to me that each race has the ability to look at how magic reacts with the physical plane in different ways, and is able to use those viewpoints to construct spells and rituals which have racially unique effects. But, though the spells originate from one people or another, they can be learned by magic users of any background if they can find a teacher. So, in game system terms, you divide magic into realms based on race, rather than on Essence, Channeling, and Mentalism.

Also, it appears that Tolkien divided his magic into the two classic forms of Rituals and Commands. As you know, the major difference between these two forms is time. Rituals take time to set up and activate, but, in most magic systems, rituals are much more powerful and variable, being able to call forces beyond the caster to create a great range of effects.

Commands, on the other hand, are instantaneous, but are much more limited in scope, as they tend to be very focused, encompassing but one concept such as "open," "away," "die," and so on. In most universes, commands are usually something like cheater codes that were installed in the

physics of that universe by it's creators. In the Tolkien mythos, there are plenty of such elder creators that may have placed these commands in the cosmic structure in order to facilitate an easier lifestyle. Also, since these beings de-evolved from godhood, they could have brought the more common words of power with them, teaching them to members of different races as gifts or bribes.

Commands can also be race-specific, as a people's viewpoint on how the universe works may include a natural understanding of what a word might be for something. For example, Hobbits, being the slothful, hedonistic race that they are, would naturally be inclined to see the patterns in the universe that would allow them to understand the command word which raises and lowers their La-z-boy recliners. Orcs, having no inclination to be the perennial couch potatoes that Hobbits are, would find this concept alien, having more use for the Words of Power that abolish athlete's foot and the clap.

In any case, for Tolkien purists, I believe a new magic system should be constructed to take the place of the more powerful Spell Law. In this way, a purist might find it easier to fit his campaign into the world of Tolkien.

Are There Middle-earth Equivalents to Essence, Cnannelins:, and Mentalism?

Chris Seeman:

In the course of re-editing the *Arnor* module, it occurred to me that Wesley Frank used the term "Essence" quite frequently to describe magical or mystical power in Middle-earth. In order to better integrate a system-specific concept like this to Tolkien's world, I turned to Morgoth's Ring in search of an "indigenous" vocabulary to match (or at least approximate) the gaming concept being invoked. Here is the solution I arrived at. (Note that I do not hereby conclude that ICE's tripartite division of magic is wholly compatible with Tolkien's categories; I merely suggest that, if one chooses to utilize *MERP* or *RM* game mechanics in a Middle-earth setting, this represents one means of reaching a closer approximation to Tolkien's world.)

Essence — The energy or *fairë* (Q. "radiance") generated by all *fëar* (Q. "spirits;" sing. *fëa*). Essence serves as the basic medium for all forms of magic. The ultimate source of Essence is Eru Ilúvatar; but all of Eru's offspring, whether Ainur or Incarnates (Elves, Men, Dwarves, etc.), once brought into being, possess an individual and distinctive *fairë* of their own. The three realms of magic (Essence, Channeling, and Mentalism) draw upon different sources or levels of *fairë* for their power. The realm of (pure) Essence derives from the Nárë Úfirima (Q. "Flame Imperishable"), the primal *fairë* through which the spirit of Eru "in-dwells" the world he has created. This energy is also known as the Muinárë (Q. "Secret Fire;" S. Naur Thurin), and is occasionally used as a euphemism for Ilúvatar himself. The realm of Channeling refers to the demiurgic activity of the Valar and Maiar, and its energy derives specifically from the Essence with which they have imbued the substance of Arda. Melkor, originally the most powerful of the Valar, corrupted all physical matterwith his Morifairë (Q. "Dark Essence"), and from this element his servants are able to work wicked sorcery and black magiks. The Elves often refer to Dark Essence as the Mordo (Q. "Shadow;" lit. "Taint"). Mentalism, the third realm of magic, draws exclusively upon the Essence of the individual spellcaster.

ARE THERE MIDDLE-EARTH EQUIVALENTS TO ESSENCE, CHANNELING, AND MENTALISM?

Steffen Solomon responds:

In my campaign, there are such rare holy people who act as "friends" or "servants" of patron Valar. While they clearly do not "worship" the Valar, they honor them highly. The Will of Eru and the Song of Creation are things that even the Valar have difficulty discerning. Much more so do the Incarnates. So it may be that a holy person seeks to promote the Will of Eru by referring to the methods, manner and themes of a particular Vala. So a holy person might try to follow the path of Varda, Kindler of Stars as they become a Seer (a 1st Ed. RM Channeling class). This Seer may enjoy a special "blessed" status akin to (but lesser than) the kings of Arnor and Gondor (for these kings act as the mediators and physical representatives of the Will of Eru). The Seer may look to the stars for guidance and foretelling. They may have powers of Light (e.g. creating physical light or a spiritual light that repels the undead/ demonic). Such Seers may seek to aid other heroes by encouraging them or bolstering their flagging spirits (just as Varda and her chosen Istar, Gandalf, did).

However, if you imagine that in the world there is an oceanic pool of Essence that varies in quality and quantity and from which Essence user's draw, then it is possible to imagine that Morgoth's Dark Essence is like a polluted mass that flows in the pool but remains distinct from Essence. Channeling may represent however a spiritual connection that allows the Vala to "bless" the "servant" with a more pure Essence (thus being recognized as holy or clean of taint). In addition, a worshipper of Morgoth may develop a connection to Morgoth that would allow him to draw a "purer" Dark Essence. I cannot cite passages, but I seen to recall that when Morgoth was shut out into the Void he became powerless to affect the world personally and physically, but that he remained a dark spirit that could infect/affect others.

I don't believe that the Power needs to have a conscious attentiveness (unless a miracle or its evil equivalent is called for) to the "worshipper" to give power but rather a spiritual relationship of connectedness. However, I like much of what you say and I'm interested enough to re-read Morgoth's Ring.

ARE THERE MIDDLE-EARTH EQUIVALENTS TO ESSENCE, CHANNELING, AND MENTALISM?

Lake Potter responds:

Chris Seeman's assessment of Essence is right on. It must be the latent magic in Arda itself which is drawn upon both in a primal form (words of power) and a more ritualized form (the spells that we often see Gandalf casting when he has time to prepare himself). Furthermore, the use of essence spells must, in some way expose the caster's location and identity to other casters. (See Gandalf's fire spell on the slopes of Caradhras.) A lot of the old spell lists should be either disallowed, or changed completely. For example, I never saw Gandalf (or anyone for that matter) throwing around fireballs or bolts, but he did have that one cool trick with the burning branch in the forests outside Goblin-gate, and that fire-trick-thing he used against the wargs in FotR.

As Chris suggests, the dispersement of the "Morgoth element" fits the definition of Dark Essence very neatly. I can't imagine a more appropriate fit. What's needed is an reshuffling of the spell lists, possibly making Dark Essence a realm of its own. Throw the Dark Mage, Sorcerer and Dark Cleric spell lists in with a few basic utilitarian lists like "Lofty Bridge," and you have a new realm that specifically describes the use of Melkor-magic. That would give your typical dark spellcaster use of demon gates, necromancy and curses of all kinds.

I have to disagree with Stephen on the channeling bit, though. I see channeling as a very intentional and context specific granting of prayer on the part of the "higher power." It's useful to look beyond the definition, to the types of power typically granted by channeling spells.

First, there is an overabundance of the mundane. Why does a Ranger have to be a channeler? Reading tracks *et al* should have more to do with specific practiced skills and experience with a certain area than it should with endearment to a demigod's heart. When a Ranger casts a *Read Tracks* spell, or a *Path Tale* spell, he is receiving a vision directly from his deity of information that he would not commonly have access to. That is a miracle. The same holds true with concealment type spells, water-walking and such, instant food multiplication, and instant quick-fix healing. These all sound like your typical run-of-the-mill miracles to me. In fact, this paragraph is starting to sound more like Jesus' resume than a discussion of magic in Middle-earth.

If channelers exist, they are the Valar and the Maiar, possibly Elves (if their songs could be construed as spells of some kind), and potentially the King of Gondor (if there is actually any "magic" happening on Mindolluin). In any event, Elven magic should receive special treatment. One would have to be very careful to distinguish natural Elven abilities with tricks we might call "magic," however. Smithing magic deserves consideration: Elven, Dwarven, Mannish and Maiar-made artifacts should be treated separately. There are a lot more considerations to be made, but I won't list them. Suffice it to say that I don't think the *Rolemaster* system fits Middle-earth magic very well. That highlights, however, the beauty of the system itself; one can easily adapt the offending aspect to one's personal tastes without affecting those parts that you do like.

ARE THERE MIDDLE-EARTH EQUIVALENTS TO ESSENCE, CHANNELING, AND MENTALISM?

Steve Danielson responds:

I prefer to explain the three realms of magic as follows, tying them to the Song of Creation, degenerative magic in Middle-earth, corruption, and power levels. A central idea that this explanation draws off is that the Song of Creation continues to play and evolve in Me from the initial song sung in the beginning. In time, the Song reflects Arda, and Arda reflects the Song.

Channeling: Problematic as it stands, I choose to view it as trying to use one of the themes in the Song, or to influence/all those beings closely tied to one of the themes in the Song. Most resistant to corruption depending on the source of power. There is evil and good in the Song/Arda.

Essence: I consider Essence as trying to manipulate Arda/Song to the wielder's will. There is a danger of corruption from the taint of Morgoth. Consider this as corruption rules from AC for Essence.

Mentalism: I consider this as a reflection of the wielder's Inner Fire, some races have it stronger than others. This allows one to see into the minds of others and accomplish great feats with their own body. It will allow the wielder to effect the physical world very little (I would restrict the Solid, Liquid, Gas, and TK lists in Middle-earth.) [Elves, High Men, Men, Dwarves, Hobbits in decreasing order of strength]

Evil Magic: This is the influence of Morgoth in Middle-earth, consider its source as a corrupted thread of the Song/ Arda. Arda is, after all, *Morgoth's Ring*.

Arcane: None allowed in this setting.

Magic, power levels, artifacts, and spell casting: Basically a person's magical strength is tied to how closely they are part of the Song of Creation. Valar and Maiar who actually took part in the Song, gained significant power in Middle-earth to influence it, providing they descended to Middle-earth and gained physical form. Those who were sung into being as a central theme of the song gained some power as well. The other influencing factor for magical strength in Middle-earth is how closely that person is tied to the Song of Creation. Elves are closely tied, since they are immortal, with the older Elves having more magical strength (especially those who lived in Valinor); Men less so, since their spirits depart Middle-earth, and Dwarves and Hobbits even less so, since they were most likely creations of a single voice without the help (harmony) of others.

Artifacts in Middle-earth have the ability to increase a wielder's magical power by tying them more closely to Middle-earth and the Song. The One Ring for example, tied Sauron's spirit so tightly to Middle-earth that he would return to it if he was slain.

Spell casting I divide into two categories: Spells and Words of Command. Spells are basically what you see in Spell Law, with increased casting times for certain lists. Words of Command are when you try to create a magical effect with your own innate raw power without needing spell casting times or a specific spell. Words of Command are basically baring your spirit to the Song/Arda and trying to mold it. As a result they can be very dangerous in terms of corruption. A Word of Command effect is basically GM determined though I require the spell user to have some knowledge in a related spell list in order to create an effect.

PRODUCT REVIEW

Coleman Charlton
Jessica Ney-Grimm, et al.

Middle-earth: The Wizards

Charlottesville, Virginia
Iron Crown Enterprises, 1996

ICE has eventually filled the unforgivable lack of a reference to Tolkien's world in the *mare magnum* of the existing collectible card games (CCG) with the publication of *Middle-earth: The Wizards* (*ME:TW*), after the denial of Wizards of the Coast (creators of *Magic: The Gathering)* of undertaking the project. Despite of the difficulty of designing a card game placed in Middle-earth, Coleman Charlton and his team have dealt wisely with the task and have devised a good story: each player takes the place of one of the five Istari (namely Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast, Alatar and Pallando) and tries to gain as many followers and resources to their cause as possible so he is elected as the defender of the Free Peoples in their struggle with Sauron when the Free Council is held. However, it must be yet considered if this is really a quality product or just a bluff to shut fans' mouths.

The first impression when you open your first starter deck is that *AIE:TW* has been thoroughly planned and that nothing has been left to improvisation or hurry. If you are already a follower of Professor Tolkien, you will be overwhelmed by the huge emotion of getting in your hands cards describing everything that you have read in the books:

Aagorn II, Lórien, Smaug, Dol Amroth, Shadowfax, the palantíri or good old Bilbo are just examples of what you will find. If you are a "rookie" in Middle-earth, the stuff is just visually good enough to make you think twice before you reconsider the possibly of getting rid of the deck.

Let's carefully examine the cards. There are a total of 488 (four of them being promotional). They are divided in five categories, depending on their function in the game: character cards, which describe the people involved in the War of the Ring, resource cards, which describe items, events, factions and allies which may help us in our quest, hazard cards, which take the place of Sauron's forces, site cards and region cards, which allow the players to travel along Middle-earth. Each card is composed of two parts, artwork and information. ICE has made a great effort and has collected a good amount of cool artwork, except for a few disgraceful cases, from the most important Tolkien's illustrators, including one of the best, Angus McBride. I personally miss Alan Lee's works, but that's another story. The information provided on each card, depending on its type, consists of stats, symbols, effects, location, points and much more data, including quotes of where it appears in Tolkien's books. Enough detail for players and collectors.

If cards are one of the fundamental aspects of a CCG (no cards, no game), rules are the other one without a doubt.

If you want people to play, you must offer playable rules, i.e., they must be complex enough, well structured, short of ambiguities, easy to browse and quick to put into practice. We'll see each requisite in detail. The rules offer enough challenge to maintain our attention, but not so much that we get lost in lots of things to do and consider. The rulebook of *ME:TW* is clearly divided in parts, sections and subsections, offering the rules in the proper order so you can have a good view of the game after a first reading. There are very few spots in the rules that don't appear as clear as they should, but they don't mess the thing to the extreme of getting completely lost. What's more, ICE has published revisions and clarifications, taking good care of the problem. Another virtue of the rulebook is that you can easily find what you are looking for, just in case you need to refresh your memory in the middle of a game. It also offers a full-color map, explaining diagrams of the cards, a full player turn summary, an index and tables containing all the information you may need while playing, e.g., combat modifications or symbol keys. Finally, a starter deck is really that, i.e., buy the deck, read the rules, find a mate and play! I did all this in just a few hours, which was what satisfied me most.

The game in itself is not difficult to understand or carry out. Just look for some friends (up to 5 players, woh!!), rearrange your decks and start looking for adepts to our cause. But while plaving the part of an Istar and trying to be the "best," you can also try other quests during the game, e.g., rescuing prisoners from the evil forces or, what sounds amazing, carrying the One Ring to Mount Doom to destroy it (which, by the way, allows you to win the game automatically). This concept of secondary quests is going to be reinforced in

later expansions, e.g., in *The Dragons*, you will be able to sneak into a dragon's lair and steal all his gold. Great, isn't it? Now I've mentioned expansions, I find the actual policy of ICE of issuing more *ME:TW* stuff the right one. Out in the shops are already the Unlimited Edition, the aforementioned *Dragons* expansion and the valuable compilation of information in *The Wizards Companion*. In the next months, ICE will surprise us with more material, e.g., the eagerly awaited *Dark Minions* expansion, by which we will be able to play the part of "Uncle" Sauron.

ICE has taken advantage of the fact that Middle-earth is a rich and firmly established background, making it appealing for Tolkien's fans and for CCG players. Unfortunately, ICE is restricted by their contract with Tolkien Enterprises to the publishing of Third Age stuff, but I am sure that they'll come round this with their demonstrated imagination and creativeness. Besides, ICE has a great service on-line to support their customers, so if you have access to the World Wide Web, have a look at the following URL: http://www.ironcrown.com/metwm.html. You will find there revisions of the rules, frequently asked questions, errata list, card list and information on the Istari tournaments, known as Councils. If you love Tolkien's world or would just like to try a CCG, this product is a must. I can happily claim that *ME:TW* is a high quality product and that it will give you lots of fun and the joy of collecting Tolkien stuff. Try it!

Reviewer:
Marco Antonio Blanco Navarrete

Product Review

Anders Blixt, Chris Seeman, et al.

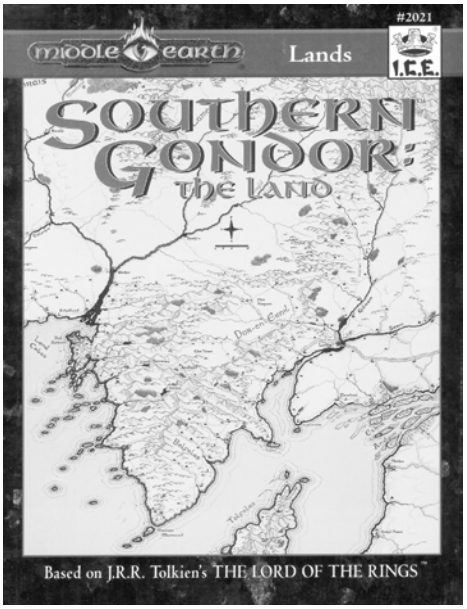
Southern Gondor: The Land

(#2021)

Charlottesville, Virginia: Iron Crown Enterprises, 1996

[208 pgs + 2 fold-out maps; $30.00]

Southern Gondor: The Land is the first title in ICE's Lands of Middle-earth adventure game series. Its organizational structure is easy to follow and expanded into more detail the farther you read into the module. Due to the amount of detail provided in the heart of the module, the first four sections are brief. The Introduction (Section 1.0) tells how the module is structured, gives a general description of the region and how the series of *Land*-modules fits into the overall ICE product line. The Overview (Section 2.0) gives a short history of the inhabitants of Gondor. The Land (Section 3.0) speaks of the geography, topography and the climate of southern Gondor, including tables for bay winds, temperature ranges, wind averages and general rain probabilities. Flora and Fauna (Section 4.0) is a condensed account of plant and animal life for the major land types of southern Gondor. Sources of crops, predominate animals (predator and non) are listed.



Up to this point all sections are very brief and general, though that is about to change. A Gazetteer to Southern Gondor (Section 5.0) is where the module starts to excel. This section is an alphabetical listing of all names and places mentioned in text or on the maps, not limited to this module but including other *Middle-earth Role Playing* publications dealing with Gondor. This is one of the best ideas that I have seen from any module published anywhere. An alphabetical reference for all noted points on the maps and beyond really worked for me! Descriptions from the first settled years through the Fourth Age for each location provide an aid for gamemasters, allowing them important information for specific points of interest. References are made to alternate names for locations with the description under the most common used name in T.A. 1640. Specific topics covered for land areas ranged from History, The Land, Flora and Fauna, The Inhabitants, Politics and Power to Warcraft. Historic language commentaries are also made by the King's Writer, Findegil, which explain contradictions in name translations, names derived from other sources and some other surprises.

Havens (Section 6.0) limits itself to the largest and most important population centers specific to the T.A. 1640. City design is discussed, district-by-district descriptions are expanded, with occasional drawings and maps made available to aid the visual side. Citadels (Section 7.0) provides detailed descriptions of the design and layout of six of the greatest citadels of Middle-earth. Lond Duilin, the Paths of the Dead, Tirith Aear, the Hall of the Faithful, Ost-en-Ernil and Barad Aerhir are detailed with many drawings and references.

The Lost Elendilmir (Section 8.0) offers some fun for the gamemasters by giving interconnected adventures set in southern Gondor in T.A. 1450. The quest is in search of the long lost Númenórean artifact, the Elendilmir. A historical background, important NPCs and a series of settings and tasks are provided with alternative endings for the adventure. Rise of the Pretender (Section 9.0) supplies a second series of adventures tied to eastern Gondor during the time of the second Wainrider invasion. A nobleman from Harondor

named Gethron becomes the center of these adventures, allowing possibilities for aiding or opposing his quest for power. The same organizational structure is provided for the adventure, but also allows some options and twists.

Tables (Section 10.0) offers stats for the NPCs for both adventure series as well as encountered beasts and military forces. Conversion/translation values are given for *MERP, RM* and *LoR* systems for locks, traps and specific magical items used in the adventures. Ships (Section 11.0) offers scale drawings of many beautiful sea going vessels from a Southron merchant vessel to a Númenórean *palanrist*. Two color maps are included in the module with the standard that ICE has been noted for. The maps divide southern Gondor into east and west sections. The back of the east section contains a map of Pelargir. Building types for the inner city are color coded with middle and outer city buildings drawn in. The back of the west section map is a map of Lond Ernil. The buildings are color coded, with important buildings getting short descriptions.

Southern Gondor. The Land is a sizable module (200+ pages) that will reward players or collectors alike in its wealth of information, attention to detail and background data. Written in a simple storytelling format with many physical / observed / strategic descriptions, *The Land* opens up common information that travelers would know or soon learn by observation. The importance of strongholds, cities, bridges and many of the common features of the region are pointed out providing unlimited adventure opportunities throughout. Other titles planned for future release include *Northern Gondor, Mordor* and *Lindon.*

My role playing has developed through exposure to many gaming styles, rules and environments. Not only do I look at modules for the system that they were primarily designed for, but I also look at their generic value and ability to be used in a variety of rule systems. *Southern Gondor: The Land* would allow someone using any gaming system a knowledgeable environment to run in. This is one of the best modules that I have seen in covering all locations referenced by name or map location. Obviously this is a very large undertaking and scores a very high mark for me. It put together a lot of data in a logical neat package that will be an aid that I will use. Every page is a pleasure to read and easy to understand with descriptions, details and items of interest for all. It has been a pleasure doing the review and hope this aids others in deciding to add or not *Southern Gondor: The People* to their library of reference materials.

Reviewer: Randy Gilbertson

Southern Gondor

A Second Review...

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. In the case of *Southern Gondor: The Land* (*SG:TL*), a few pictures are worth a couple hundred pages. SG:TL is the second volume of the southern Gondor Realm module coverage for the *MERP, LoR,* and *Rolemaster* systems. *The Land* tops 200 pages in text and includes two four-page fold-out color maps of the quality that we've come to expect from Pete Fenlon. The maps cover "traditional" southern Gondor entirely, from the extreme western tip of Andrast to the line of the Poros river. On their reverse sides can be found maps of Dol Amroth and Pelargir. Like its companion volume. *Southern Gondor: The People,* this work represents the carefully blended material of several authors; and for that reason the first round of kudos have to go to the editorial staff. *The Land* is a very cohesive and entertaining read.

The heart of *The Land* (and really of the entire *Southern Gondor* pair) is the map set and the 105 page gazetteer that details it. The gazetteer is an alphabetical listing of every site of interest, both natural and cultural, that appears on the maps and within the conceivable borders of southern Gondor. In addition, there is a large body of entries that detail sites that might once have been included within the boundaries of the realm, but had been lost prior to the War of the Ring. Most of these sites should have appeared on a Harondor map that wasn't included with the set. Without this map, most of the material detailing regions south of the Poros is virtually incomprehensible. Fortunately for the readers of this journal, Mr. Seeman, one of the chief authors of the work, included a supplement map in the previous issue of *Other Hands* (#13) that details the omitted region and largely rights the wrong done.

Some of the entries are short paragraphs and some are many-page explanations. Many are also accompanied by a small annotation by Findegil, renowned King's Writer of Fourth Age Gondor. In each annotation, Findegil is writing for the benefit of King Eldarion; trying to guess the origins and etymology of many of the mutated and grammatically incorrect place names that dot the landscape. This writing convention made my forced march through the gazetteer an entertaining experience, and served to liven-up a read that might have otherwise dragged.

To give you an idea of what's in the gazetteer without actually giving away any of its precious secrets, I've come up with five general classes into which each entry might fall. The following is an explanation for the kinds of material you might typically find in each type of entry.

1) Mountains and hills: These include entries for entire ranges, specific peaks of individual character, and strategic passes. The explanations do not dwell as much on geology as they explain the historical significance of the site in question. There are entries for subsidiary ranges of the Ered Nimrais, the various dry ranges of hills in Harondor and the foreboding peaks of the Caradhram Nurn (southern arm of the Ephel Dúath).

2) Waterways: Every rill on the map that bears a name gets its own description in the gazetteer. This includes mountain streams, major rivers, and of course the mighty Anduin and Harnen estuaries. Typically the entries discuss fordability, navigability and the character of river-traffic. Each name is explained and historical references are detailed (e.g., the crossings of the Erui, the ford at Athrad Poros).

3) Bays, Capes, Coasts and Islands: The coastline of southern Gondor is extremely long and vulnerable to attack by sea. SG:TL gives the coastline a great deal of treatment for the benefit of gamemasters interested in naval based campaigns. Similarly, each natural haven, both exploited and otherwise, is described. The wild and dangerous cape of Andrast is given a great deal of detail, most of which is (I believe) entirely original to this work.

Lastly, the volcanic island of Tolfalas receives some attention, complete with an entry for Imrazôr's Hallow, one of the most holy sites of Gondor.

4) Forests, Swamps and Wild Lands: These entries are as varied as the areas they describe. In many cases, the forests described are but shadows of their former selves, denuded by the ship-borne Númenóreans of old. Some are ancient and inviolate, striking fear into the locals (in the spirit of the Old Forest). Some (like those of Harithilien and Edhellond) still bear evidence of an ancient and benevolent Elven influence. The swamps that dot the landscape, both old and new to this work, are given decent treatment. There are also relatively lengthy sections for areas that fall outside the effective range of direct Gondorian control. These regions include the highland vales of the Ered Nimrais, as well as regions west of Anfalas.

5) Cultural Sites: These make up the majority of the entries and are often long and surprisingly detailed. Each distinct region receives the "land/history/inhabitants/warfare/politics and power" treatment that long-time ICE followers have come to expect. Each town's, village's, and city's history and character are described. Many roads and bridges also receive detailed entries.

Last are the various sites that make southern Gondor seem like a complete and realistic kingdom. These are things such as mines, prisons, castles, towers, and holy sites. Any one of these sites might hatch numerous adventure and campaign ideas in the mind of the creative gamemaster.

Following the gazetteer is a section on the havens of southern Gondor: Pelargir, Lond Ernil, Linhir and Edhellond. These descriptions are typically short and very general in character. Some of the more popular and remarkable sites are given a short description, but the vast majority of the detail work is left up to the gamemaster (or more probably for authors of future MERP Citadel modules). The Pelargir city map is a direct reprint of a previously released map. The Lond Ernil layout that appears in the text has been completely reworked, but the aforementioned version that appears on the back of the colored maps has unfortunately been unrevised from the old *Havens of Gondor* module where it first appeared. ICE also completely reprinted the now defunct key to Lond Ernil right next to the color map. The two keys are, in many places, at odds with one another. If nothing else, I guess it gives the reader a sense of the changes that have been made to the original material.

The next section details some of the more influential citadels of southern Gondor. This list includes Lond Duilin (at Edhellond), the Paths of the Dead, Tirith Aear and Ost-en-Ernil (both at Lond Ernil), and Barad Aerhir and the Hall of the Faithful (in Pelargir). All provide room-by-room descriptions of the site in question. The map of the Paths of the Dead is definitely a reprint from the older module of the same name, but the description has been completely reworked to fit the new concept of the site first expressed in *The People*.

The last two sections of the text deal with two extended campaigns that attempt to put all of the above material into action. Let me preface my opinions of these campaigns by stating that I haven't yet run either of them. I like the general feel and subject of the first, "The Lost Elendilmir." It has the potential for realistically involving characters of low and medium influence in the larger events of Gondorian history. Basically, it deals with the search for a secret and powerful treasure of Númenor that has been stolen from Imrazôr's Hallow and lost in the wild back-country of Anfalas. Characters will travel across Gondor, deal with a wide variety of local cultures, and come into conflict with many different kinds of enemies. What I like most about the campaign is the underlying theme of fatalism that is so frequent among Tolkien's own writings. I will run this campaign and recommend it for those who favor long and detailed role-playing.

I am less enthusiastic about the second campaign, "Rise of the Pretender." The setting of the Second Wainrider War is an attractive one, but the adventures themselves don't appeal to my own tastes in Middle-earth gaming. The general gist is that a nobleman of Harondor uses the events and climate of the war to maneuver himself into position to make a claim to the throne (in opposition to Eärnil and Arvedui). These adventures are less logically linked together and probably occur over a longer timeframe. What turns me off to this campaign is its use of high-fantasy themes that often seemed a bit contrived. The use of NPCs such as a lone Dwarf survivor (of a feud between his prospecting group and Orc-tribes), a lone Avarin Elf-maiden, and a triplet of female warriors from Harondor is just the kind of convention that my desire for realism makes me shun. These types of themes, however, may actually increase the attractiveness of the module as a whole for seekers of high-fantasy role playing.

On the whole, I would have to place *Southern Gondor: The Land* on the required reading list for lovers of *Middle-earth Role Playing*. The price is hefty, but the value of the information contained is greater. Together with *The People*, this series lays down the history and culture of the most powerful kingdom in Third and Fourth Age Middle-earth. Every *MERP* author that follows this series is going to look to these two volumes for the definitive answer to how Gondor might impact their resions over the ages. Even with the sometimes significant editorial blunders, the Southern Gondor modules form a quality product worth adding to many gamemaster's collections. If you are a gamemaster that favors single-session adventures, however, this might not be the best investment of your dollar. Those who favor the more fantastic themes of Middle-earth gaming might also want to think twice about the purchase. *The Land* offers not a single Troll-hole, Orc-tribe, or dragon-hoard.

And one last cautionary note. Don't waste your time doing what I first did when I got my copy of *The Land*. Sitting down and trying to read the gazetteer from page 1 straight through to page 105 is an exercise in futility. Place your imaginary feet on the beaches of Andrast and march east, jumping from entry to entry. By the time you reach the Nan Harnen, you'll feel like you grew up in southern Gondor.

Reviewer: Luke T. Potter

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